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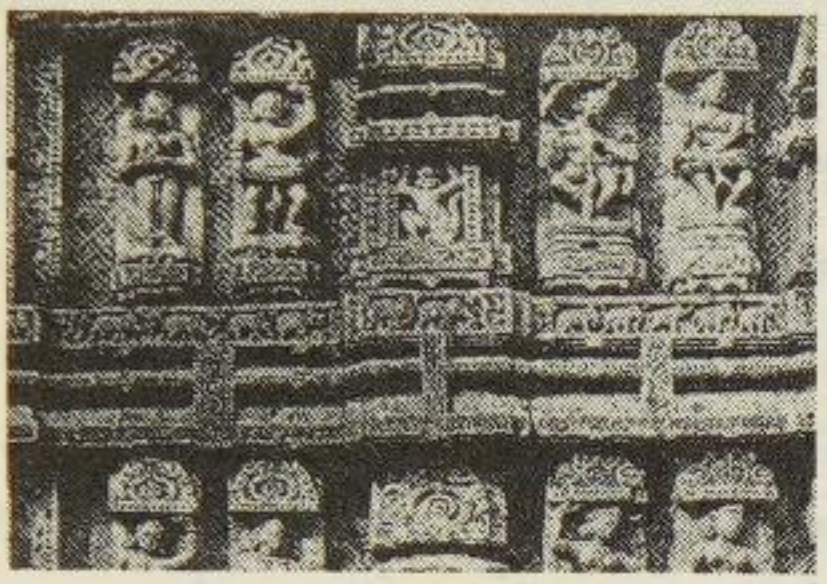


Series Editor's Preface

There are 730 sites on the World Heritage list, as on June 2002, 'inscribed' as properties by the World Heritage Committee of UNESCO. These sites are 'considered to be of outstanding value to humanity', and belong to all mankind. The preservation of this shared heritage concerns all of us. India has been an active member-state on the World Heritage Forum since 1977, and is one of the countries on the list, with 22 World Heritage Sites. Of these, 18 are recorded as cultural sites, while the rest are natural sites.

I am delighted that the Oxford University Press is publishing brief books on each of the 18 cultural sites, under its series titled *Monumental Legacy*. So far, the following cultural sites in India have been listed as World Heritage sites:

Ajanta Caves (1983), Ellora Caves (1983), Agra Fort (1983), Taj Mahal (1983), Sun Temple, Konark (1984), Group of Monuments at Mahabalipuram (1985), Churches and Convents of Goa (1986), Group of Monuments at Khajuraho (1986), Group of Monuments at Hampi (1986), Fatehpur Sikri (1986), Group of Monuments at Pattadakal (1987), Elephanta Caves (1987), Brihadisvara Temple, Thanjavur (1987), Buddhist Monuments at Sanchi (1989),

Humayun's Tomb (1993), Qutb Minar and its Monuments (1993), the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway (1999), and Bodh Gaya (2002).

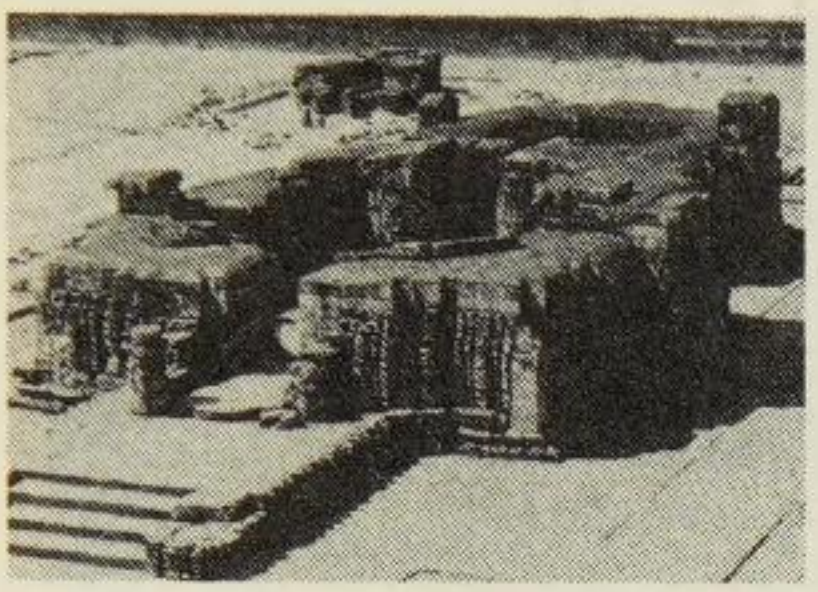
There is scope, indeed, for recognition of many more Indian sites in future on the World Heritage list. I am sure that as and when these are declared as World Heritage Sites, they will be included under the *Monumental Legacy Series* of the Oxford University Press.

The Oxford University Press, in consultation with me, has invited experts in the field to contribute small books, addressed to general readers, on each of these 18 World Heritage Sites in India. These books obviously differ from cheap tourist books and glossy guide books and, at the same time, also from specialized monographs. Their importance lies in the fact they are written by authorities on the subject, to enable visitors to see the monuments in proper perspective.

My sincere thanks to all the authors of the series and to the editorial staff at the OUP. Their constant support and enthusiasm are much appreciated.

March 2003

Devangana Desai



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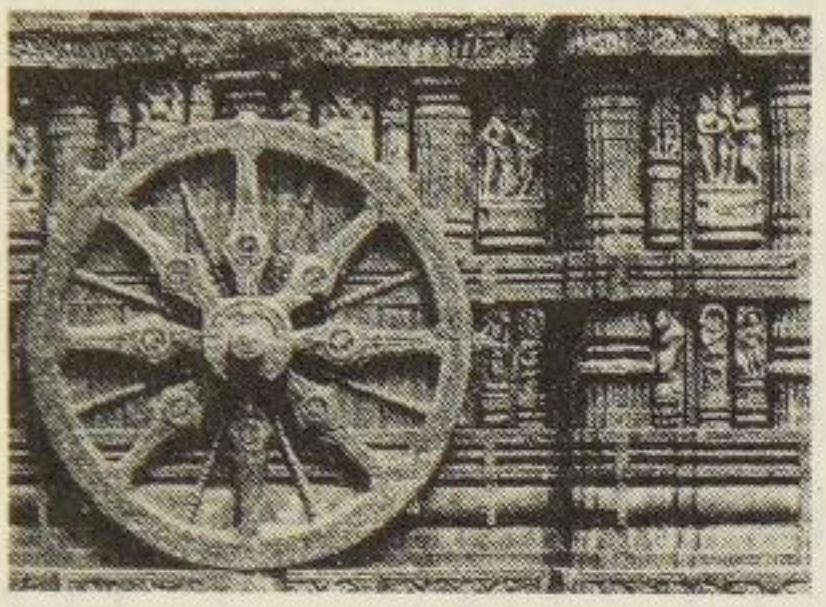

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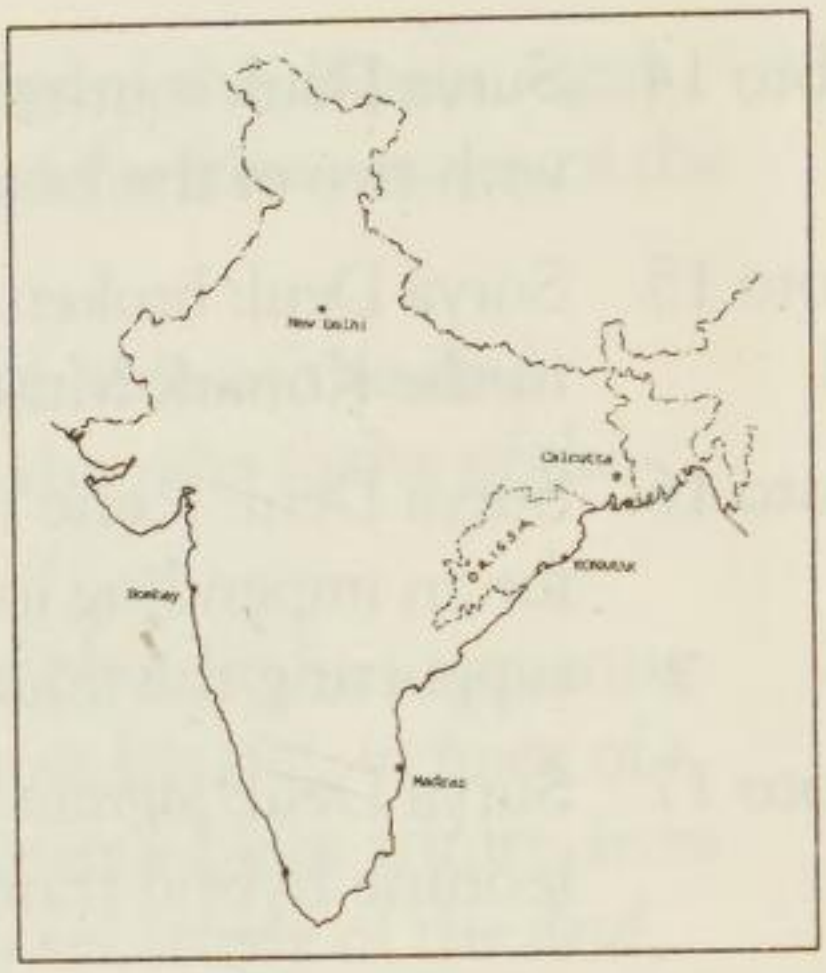


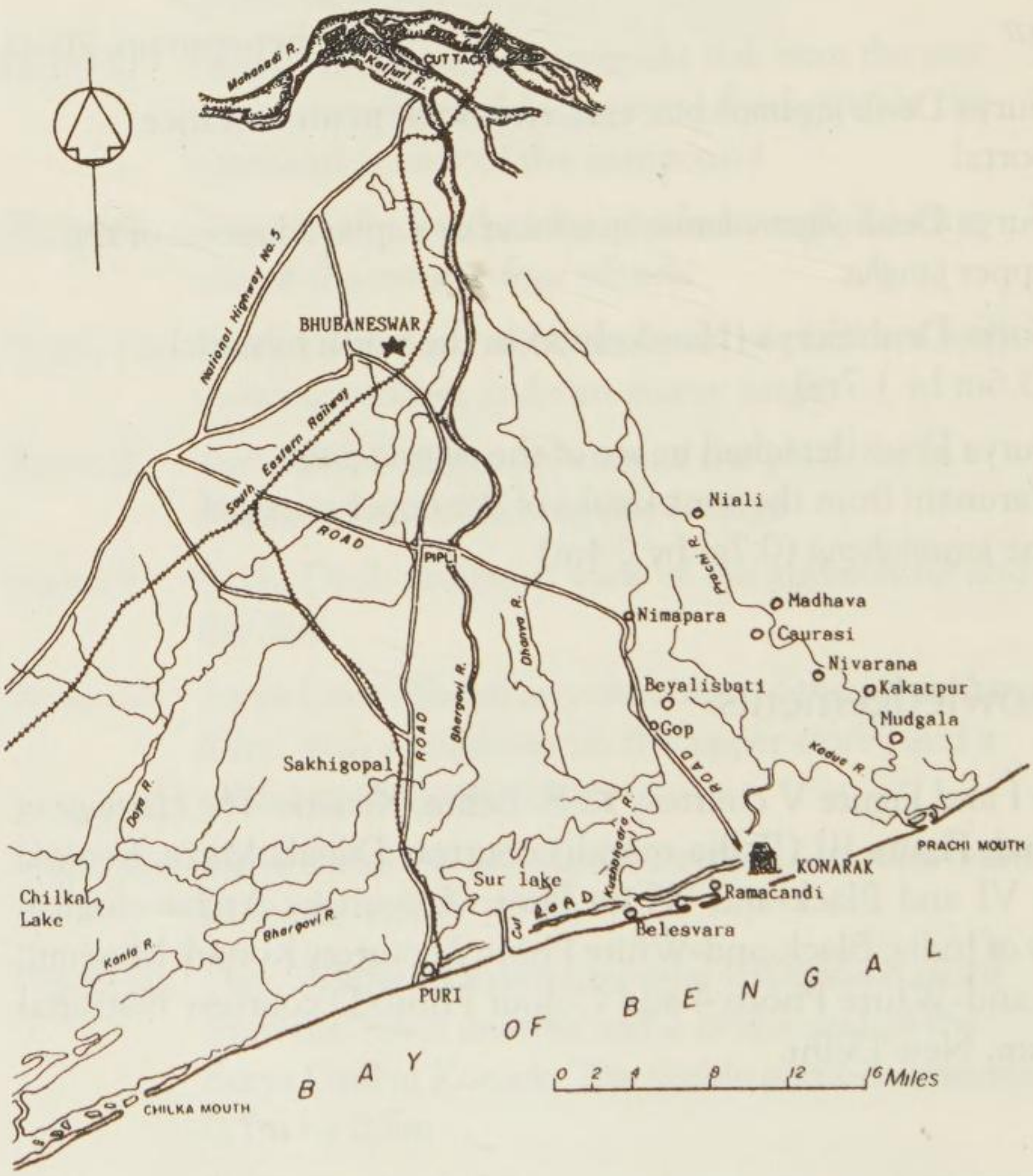


Fig. I. Map of Prachi, Kushabhadra, and Bhargavi river deltas

ONE

Introduction

Historically the modern state of Orissa, situated on the Bay of Bengal on the northeast coast of India, has been noted as 'a land of temples', even in the writings of nineteenth-century scholars. James Fergusson for example, declared that 'there are more temples now in Orissa than in all the rest of Hindustan put together', while W. W. Hunter stated that 'from end to end, it is one region of pilgrimage'. Its great sanctity is likewise extolled in various Sanskrit texts. In the *Brahma Purana* (26.39–40), when the sages ask Brahma about the most excellent place on earth, that bestows virtue (*dharma*), love (*kama*), wealth (*artha*) and salvation (*moksha*), and that is the most excellent of all holy centres, he particularly singles out Utkala (Orissa) and its four great religious centres: Konaditya (Konark, for the worship of Surya); Viraja (Jajpur, for the worship of Devi); Ekamra (Bhubaneswar, for the worship of Shiva); and Puri (for the worship of Vishnu), considering those who stay there to be dwellers of heaven while the sites themselves yield worldly pleasures and salvation on this very earth. In contrast to the other three religious centres, which are metropolitan areas, Konark is a remote site on a sandy beach near the mouth of the Chandrabhaga river, a dried-up tributary of

the Prachi. This feature led Percy Brown to conjecture that the site was selected in order 'that the practices so wantonly illustrated might be ceremoniously conducted by its addicts in an underworld of their own'. Whereas Bhubaneswar and Puri each have a multiplicity of temple complexes, Konark has a single temple complex. However, its dominating shrine, built by king Narasimha (CE 1238–64) of the Ganga dynasty and dedicated to the Sun god, is the largest temple constructed in Orissa. For its size, it has been considered to be 'the most richly ornamented building—externally at least—in the whole world'. The overwhelming abundance of sculpture in no way overshadows the architectural splendour of the monument, but as noted by Ananda Coomaraswamy greatly enriches it: 'it would be hard to find anywhere in the world a more perfect example of the adaptation of sculpture to architecture.' Its beauty was admired even by the Muslim Abu'l Fazl who, in his *Ain-i-Akbari* (sixteenth century), remarked that 'even those whose judgement is critical and who are difficult to please stand astonished at its sight.'

The Orissan style of architecture represents a unique regional variation of the Nagara (northern) style of the Hindu temple and displays its own nomenclature for architectural features. Three architectural orders described in the Vastu text, *Bhuvanapradipa*, that is, the *rekha* (with a curvilinear spire), the *bhadra* or *pidha* (with a pyramidal roof) and the *khakhara* (with an oblong *bada* and semi-cylindrical roof) are employed in various periods in Orissa for the *deul* (sanctum) of the temple complex. In its mature format however it is the rekha order that becomes the standard plan for this most sanctified part of the shrine while the pidha order becomes the standard plan for the *jagamohana* or front hall. The balance of these two contrasting superstructures, of a low *pidha-deul* as being subordinate to the higher *rekha-deul*, is peculiar to Orissa and greatly enhances the grandeur of the soaring curvilinear spire, as noted by Stella Kramrisch. A particularly distinctive feature of the Orissan temple, evident from the very beginning, is the overall clarity of the total design in plan and elevation. Each individual architectural unit is clearly defined as a self-containing element in the overall decorative programme. Each sculptural image is well contained within its pillar or niche boundaries, adhering closely to the surface. The *pagas* (vertical elements) that project

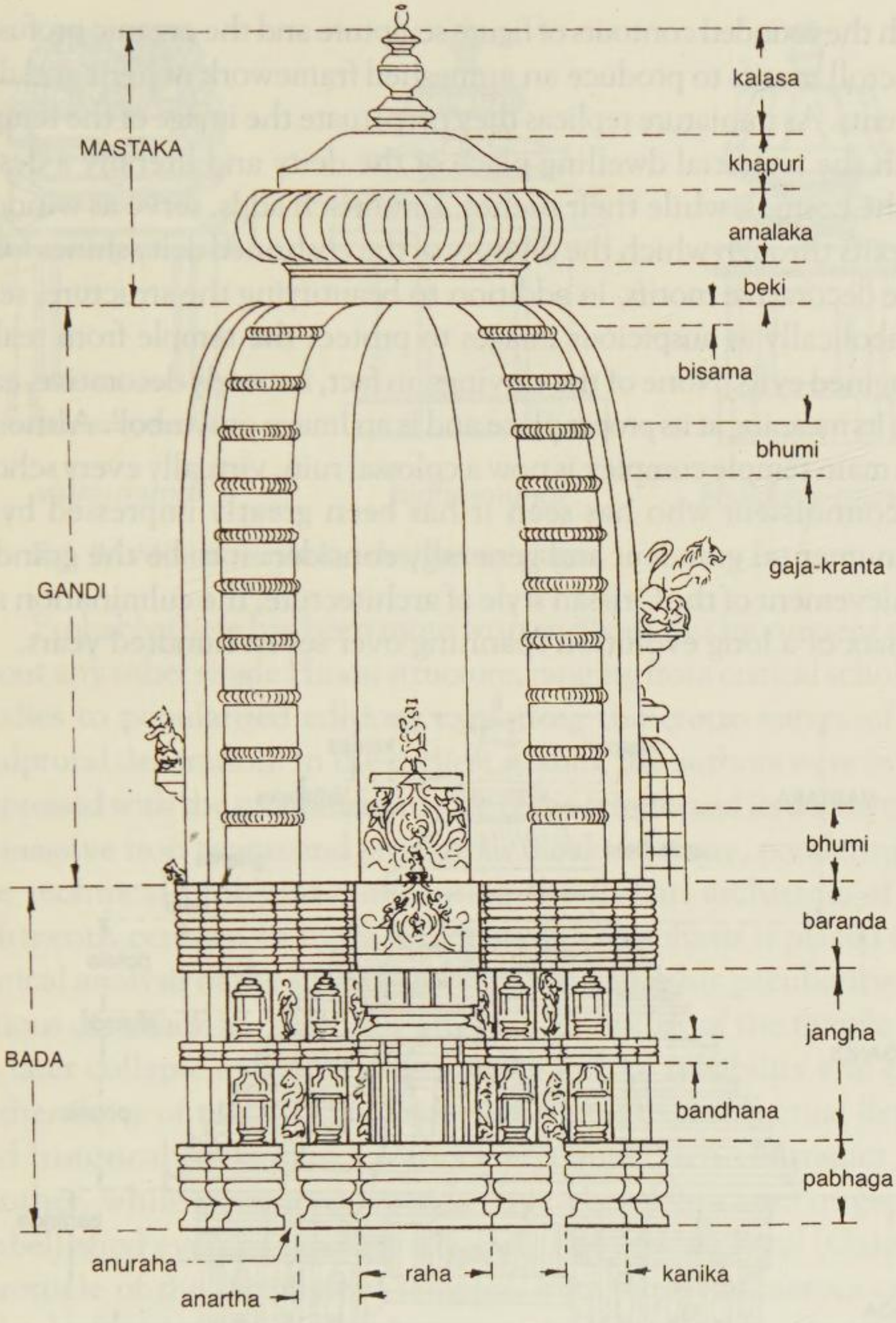


Fig. II. Principal elements of the *rekha-deul*

from the exterior walls are usually designed as *mundis* (miniature shrines) or replicas of the temple itself, complete with niche and spire. These mundis function as an ornament to beautify the structure and at the same time act as a frame to house or display images of the various deities. Their niches, offsets, and recesses cast shadows that interact

with the rounded contours of figure sculpture and the organic profusion of scroll motifs to produce an enmeshed framework of light and dark accents. As miniature replicas they perpetuate the image of the temple, both the terrestial dwelling place of the deity and literally a design of the cosmos, while their niches, Kramrisch adds, serve as windows or exits through which the divinity of the enshrined deity shines forth. The decorative motifs, in addition to beautifying the structure, serve symbolically as auspicious images to protect the temple from real or imagined evils. None of the carvings, in fact, is merely decorative, each 'has its meaning at its proper place and is an image or symbol'. Although the main temple complex is now a colossal ruin, virtually every scholar or connoisseur who has seen it has been greatly impressed by its monumental grandeur and generally considers it to be the grandest achievement of the Orissan style of architecture, the culmination and climax of a long evolution spanning over seven hundred years.

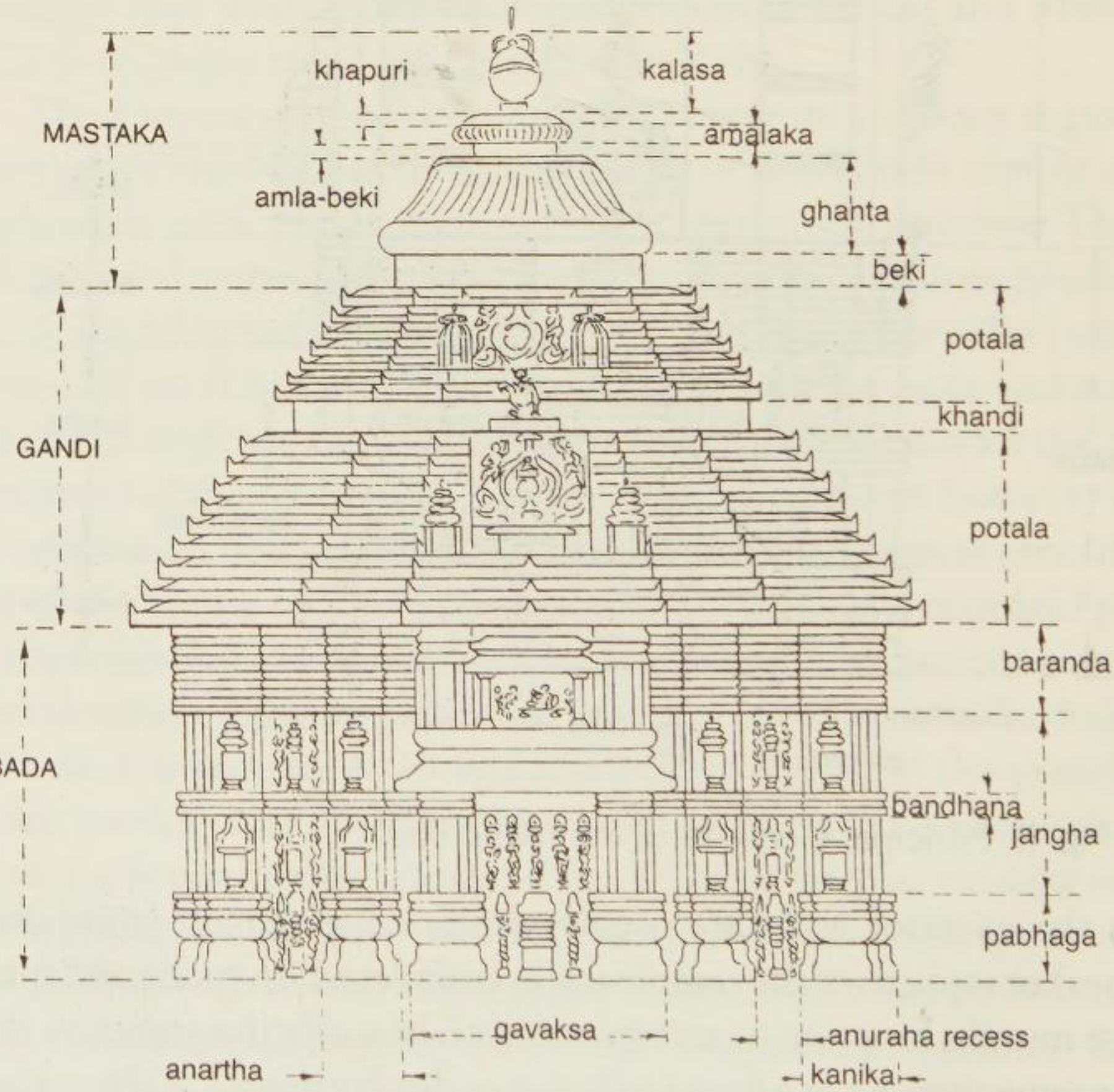
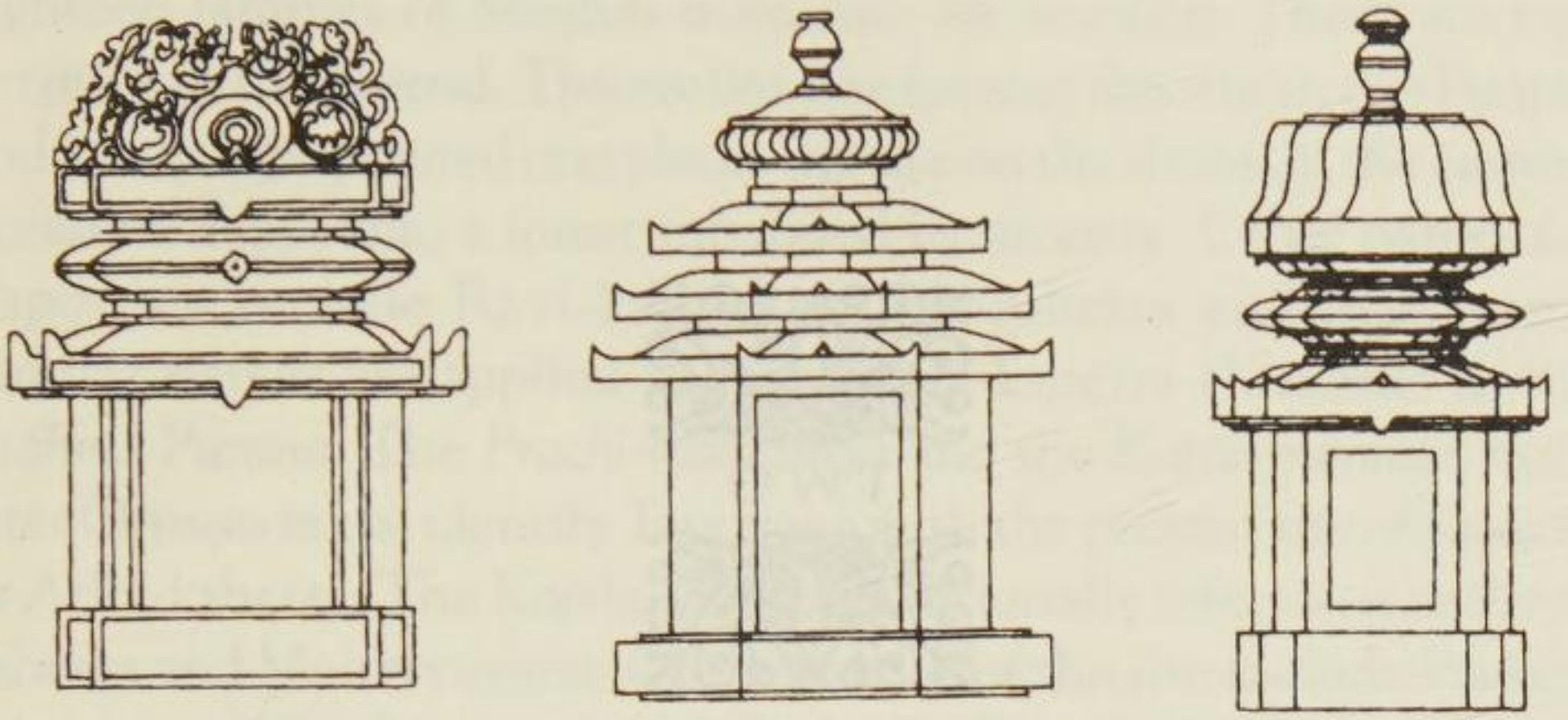


Fig. III. Principal elements of the *pidha-deul*



vajra-mundi *pidha-mundi* *khakhara-mundi*

Fig. IV. Miniature shrine designs on *pagas*

Probably there has been more written about this monument than about any other single Hindu structure, ranging from critical scholarly studies to popularized editions exploiting the erotic nature of the sculptural decoration. In the earliest studies, the authors were overly impressed with the monumental scale of the temple and its deployment of massive iron beams and prodigious blocks of stone, pondering on the technical problems confronting the Indian architects of the thirteenth century. In more recent studies, emphasis is placed on a critical analysis of the structure and its iconographic peculiarities. A serious drawback to presenting an accurate history of the temple and its later collapse and desecration is the lack of reliability and even authenticity of texts and records purporting to give factual details and historical background. Various accounts often contradict one another, while numerous legends have been fabricated or greatly embellished even by modern scholars. The *Madala Panji* (Gajapati chronicle of the Jagannatha temple), from which numerous other palm-leaf manuscripts often draw material, for example, was written long after the early history of the Surya Deul and its genealogy and chronology for pre-Somavamshi history are often misleading. Fortunately the long awaited definitive monograph by K. S. Behera has recently been published and the author addresses most of these problems.

TWO

The Sanctity of Konark

Although there are different opinions as to the origin of the word 'Konarka', it is most likely that this derives from the name of the presiding deity Konarka, which means the *arka* (sun) of *kona* (corner), the latter possibly referring to the earth, that is, the *agni-kona*, so that it could be interpreted as 'the sun in the south-eastern corner of the earth', or the 'corner of Orissa dedicated to the Sun'. The antiquity of Konark as a famous *kshetra* (pilgrimage centre) for sun worship is substantiated in numerous texts, including the *Brahma Purana*, the *Tirtha-chintamani*, and the *Kapila-samhita*. Although the temple is in ruins, even today thousands of pilgrims flock to Konark every year on *Magha Shukla saptami*, the day of the spring festival, so it is the site that is hallowed rather than the temples. Sun worship appears to have been popular as early as in the sixth–seventh centuries in Orissa as in the *Brihat-samhita* it is mentioned that the countries of Odra, Kalinga, and their people are under the direct influence of the Sun. Various texts such as the *Samba Purana*, the *Bhavishya Purana*, the *Varaha Purana*, and the *Skanda Purana* trace the worship of the Sun god back to Samba (the son of Krishna), who built the first Sun temple on the banks of the Chandrabhaga river to which he brought

eighteen families of Maghas from Iran for worship. There are two versions of the legend. The earlier one locates the site in the Punjab and a later interpolated one places the site on the shores of the eastern ocean at Tapovana, a forest inhabited by ascetics. Other names for Tapovana include Ravi-kshetra, Surya-kshetra and Mitravana. Similar names are applied to Konaditya-kshetra (Konark) in the *Brahma Purana*. The *Prachi-mahatmya* and the *Kapila-samhita*, both later Orissan texts, identify Tapovana with the present site of Konark or Arka-kshetra. The *Kapila-samhita* additionally refers to it as Ravi-kshetra and Maitreyavana. Other names for the site include Padma-kshetra and Bhaskara-tirtha while the *Brahmanda Purana* and Sarala Dasa's (Oriya) *Mahabharata* both relate that Samba propitiated the Sun god at Konark. It is thus apparent that by the fifteenth century, in order to augment the sanctity and fame of Konark, the Samba legend became associated with it and it became identified in later texts with the original Mitravana (in the Punjab).

The early sanctity of Konark as a religious site for Sun worship is substantiated in puranic passages, in eleventh-century accounts of Arab geographers, in Orissan accounts in the *Madala Panji*, and by archaeological remains including the so-called Mahagayatri (or Mayadevi) temple to the southwest of the Surya Deul. In respect to the Mahagayatri temple, there is much controversy as to its date of construction. According to tradition as recorded in the *Madala Panji*, a small temple dedicated to Surya was built at Konark by Purandara-kesari of the Somavamshi dynasty. Though the identity of Purandara-kesari is not clearly established it is possible that he could be Puranjaya (*c.* CE 1085–1100), the son and successor of Janamejaya II. That the temple was in existence during the reign of Anangabhima II (CE 1170–1190) is evident in the *Madala Panji* where it is recorded that this ruler increased the amount for the service of the deity from 42,500 cowries to 52,500. It may have been the image from this temple which, as recorded in the palm-leaf manuscript *Baya Chakada* (disputed chronicle of the building operations of the temple), being badly worn, was immersed in the ocean when the Surya Deul constructed by Narasimha I was completed and consecrated with its own image. In this manuscript, however, it is stated later on that construction on the Mayadevi (Mahagayatri) temple commenced during the fourteenth

anka of Narasimha I at a time when construction on the Surya Deul was nearing completion, suggesting that the immersed image must have belonged to an even earlier Sun temple. In the *Madala Panji*, which credits the construction of the Mahagayatri temple to Rajamata Kasturikamodini (the Queen Mother or Dowager Maharani), it is stated that the image from the earlier temple was re-installed in the Surya Deul constructed by Narasimha.

Though disagreeing as to the image enshrined in the Surya Deul, both texts imply that there was an earlier Sun temple erected at the site but that it was not the Mahagayatri. The latter, accordingly, was constructed simultaneously with the Surya Deul and was dedicated to Surya's consort or wives. In the fascicle No. 7 of Mukundadeva (*c.* CE 1551–68) of the *Madala Panji*, the temple is referred to as the Thakurani temple and reportedly was raided and destroyed by the invading Kalapahada. However, there is no record of a destroyed temple appearing in Abu'l Fazl's account in the *Ain-i-Akbari* of a few years later. It mentions that there were twenty-eight temples in the vicinity of the Surya Deul, six before the entrance and twenty-two without the enclosure, suggesting that the temple complex was still intact. According to tradition current in Konark, the puja image within the temple was known as Ramachandi and she supposedly left Konark stealthily, disguised as a woman who left with a pitcher to bring back water, when the Muslims of Bengal under Kalapahada overran the temple and destroyed it. It is believed that the image is now in worship in a temple dedicated to her on the coast about eight km south of Konark. In the palm-leaf manuscript of *The Architecture of the Padmakesara Temple of Konarka*, the puja image is declared to be an eight-armed Mahadurga whereas in the *Trikala Mahamaya Arcana Vidhi* (rules for the thrice daily worship of Mahamaya) it is described and illustrated as a ten-armed Mahagayatri. That the image was already missing in the mid-eighteenth century is mentioned in the report of Baba Brahmachari in the *Madala Panji* where he states that the image had been carried away by villagers for their own worship.

THREE

The Mahagayatri (Mayadevi) Temple

Although tradition, as recorded in later manuscripts or chronicles, thus declares that the Mahagayatri temple was constructed along with the Surya Deul in the mid-thirteenth century and was erected for the consort of Surya, surviving architectural, iconographic, and stylistic evidence refute this tradition. That the temple was erected prior to the Surya Deul of Narasimha I is substantiated by the remains of the south-eastern corner of its original enclosing wall that is still perceptible in the southern wall of the later enclosure now surrounding the entire compound. In the western flank of this south wall exists an opening which originally served as the southern gate for the Mahagayatri temple but was blocked up with the construction of the larger enclosing wall of the Surya Deul. Stylistically, the temple can be dated to the late eleventh or early twelfth century. An exception is the platform in front of the jagamohana that was added in the mid-thirteenth century. Testimony that the temple was originally dedicated to Surya, and not to his consorts, is supplied by the two *parshva-devatas* (centre side deities) still *in situ*, both being Surya images. It is quite possible that the temple was converted to the worship of Devi after the construction of the Surya Deul with its puja-image being replaced by an image of the goddess or consort of Surya.

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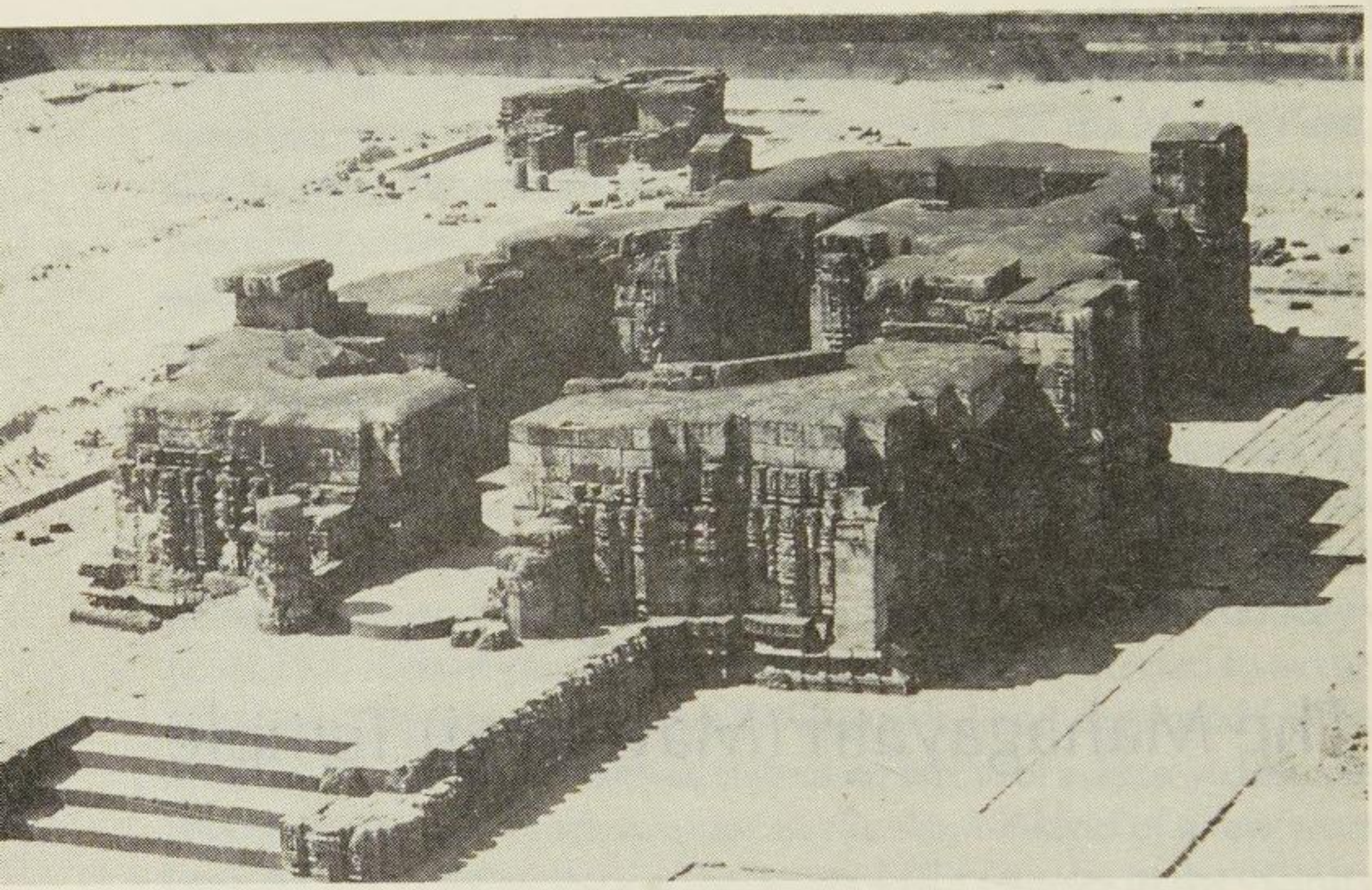


Photo 1. View of Mahagayatri temple from the northeast with the brick Vishnu temple in the background. The platform in front of the Mahagayatri is a mid-thirteenth-century addition

The temple is erected on a *pitha* (plinth) consisting of three richly ornamented mouldings. The bada (exterior wall portion) of the deul (sanctum), approximately 8.53m square, has a *sapta-ratha* (seven vertical divisions) plan with a thin *pratiratha* (vertical segment) added between the *kanika* (corner vertical division) and the *anartha* (intermediary vertical division) as on the late eleventh century Khilesvara temple at Khilor. The *pabhaga*, 2.13m high, consists of five horizontal mouldings. A *tala-garbhika* motif of an elongated khakhara-mundi flanked by a serpent-pillar on each side is inserted beneath the *raha* niches. The niche of the mundi (miniature shrine) on the west has an image of Nataraja while on the north and south these niches contain *mithuna* (amorous couple) images. The lower storey of the *jangha* of the deul is decorated with khakhara-mundi designs with the corner niches housing the *dikpalas* (guardians of the directions). Only the image of Agni (southeast) remains *in situ*. Only one image of the anartha niches remains intact, the eastern one on

the north side, and it is a fragmented Surya. The upper storey has not survived.

The sandhi-sthala or juncture connecting the deul with the jagamohana is decorated with three pagas on its jangha. The separating recesses are filled with a thin, engaged-pillar. The centre paga on the north side has an image of Surya in the niche of the khakhara-mundi while the niches of the flanking pagas are each filled with an *alasa-kanya* (indolent maiden). Surya is standing in his chariot with a full-blown lotus in each hand. Aruna and seven horses appear on the face of the pedestal.

Photo 2. Surya Deul: detached image of the *dikpala* Agni from the southeast *kanika* of the lower storey of the *deul* (0.8m by 0.5m)

The jagamohana, approximately 13.11m square, is also sapta-ratha in plan. The pabhaga, consisting of five mouldings, measures 1.58m in height. In contrast to the thin pratiratha, which has a single mundi, on the kanika and anartha these mundis are flanked on either side by a serpent-pillar and a thin khakhara-pillar. The mundi niches are filled with mithuna or alasa-kanya motifs. The serpent-pillars are decorated at the base with twin *gaja-kranta* (a lion springing on an elephant) motifs. The jangha is divided into two storeys by a *bandhana* (stringcourse) of five mouldings. The lower jangha measures 1.23m in height while the upper storey is missing. The kanika and anartha designs consist of a centre khakhara-mundi flanked on either side by an alasa-kanya and a *kumbha-stambha* (pillar with a vessel design at

the base and top), the former replacing the serpent pillar designs of the pabhaga. The mundi niches of the kanika contained the dikpalas with the images of Yama, Varuna, Vayu, Kubera and Ishana still *in situ*. The anartha niches housed the grahas (planetary deities), with four of them, including Ketu and Rahu, still in place. Despite the large size of the temple, the niches are quite small, measuring only about 35.5 cm by 17.8 cm, due to the two-storey design of the jangha and the addition of a lower stringcourse beneath the mundi. The anuraha recesses separating each paga are filled with *virala* (standing leonine) motifs. The *gavaksha* (transept) projections are flanked on either side by a multi-faceted pilaster decorated on the centre facet with a *kanya* (maiden). The window is framed by three bands of scrollwork and filled with four balusters ornamented with kanyas. A tala-garbhika design is inserted into the pabhaga beneath the window.

An unusual feature is the partial decoration of the interior of the jagamohana, the dark interior of Orissan temples usually being devoid of ornamentation, where pabhaga mouldings of varying height appear at intervals. At the corners, the mouldings are surmounted by a kanya housed in a niche framed by scrollwork. At the top of the frame is a frieze of elephants. Above are squinches in the form of corbels placed across the angles of the square room, the corbels evidently intended to convert the square into an octagon to facilitate the spanning of the roof. Their vertical face is relieved with a battle frieze. The east and west entrances, as well as the north and south gavaksha windows, are flanked on each side by a projecting paga complete with base mouldings and a two-storey jangha. The mundi niches of both storeys house alasa-kanyas. An elephant frieze caps the gavaksha opening. The pyramidal roof has not survived.

The interior floor of the *antarala* is decorated with a plain khondalite moonstone that serves as a step to the ornately decorated chlorite moonstone sill of the sanctum doorframe. The khondalite doorjambs are decorated with three miniature shrines on each side of the door opening. The inside band is a *vajra-mundi* housing the river goddesses—Ganga and Yamuna. The middle band is decorated with a khakhara-mundi housing a mithuna while the outside band has a pidha-mundi housing a four-armed doorguard, the benign one on the right and the sinister one on the left. The architrave was

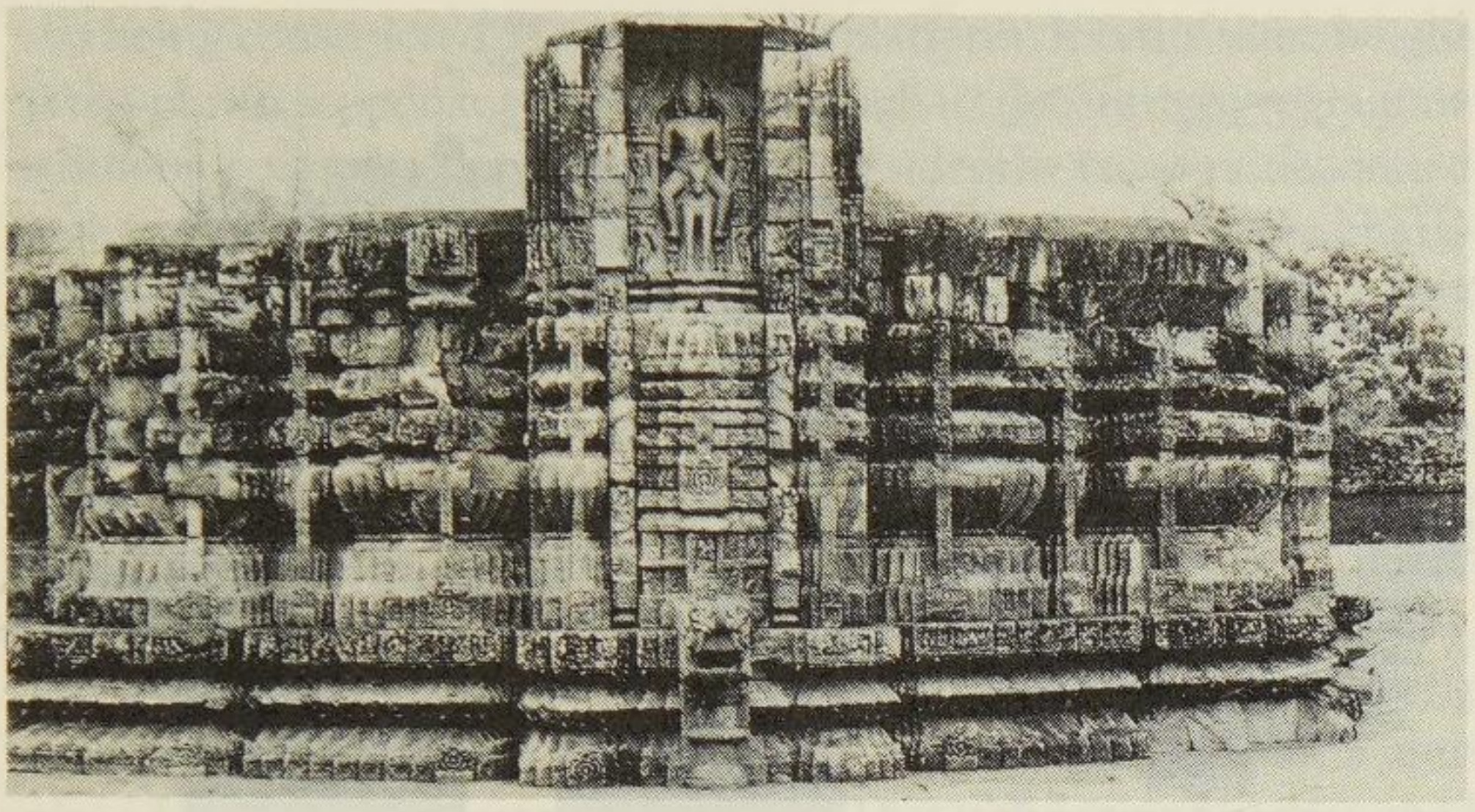


Photo 3. Mahagayatri temple: north side of the *deul* with Bhaskara (Surya) in *raha* niche of the *sapta-ratha* plan

decorated with a *navagraha* slab. The pillars flanking the entrance are mostly broken.

Two of the parshva-devatas of Surya are *in situ*, Haridashva (Bhaskara) on the north and Mitra on the south. Haridashva is seated in a hieratic pose on the back of a horse, its front hooves firmly planted on the ground. He wears a short *dhoti*, a diaphanous coat of mail and boots. He is richly ornamented and his coiffure is a tall *kirita-mukuta* (jewelled crown). His arms are broken at the elbow. The backslab is decorated with a *makara-torana* (arch) edged with flames. A warrior stands in front of a khakhara-mundi on either side at the base. A kanya holding a *chauri* (flywhisk) stands above each mundi. The image of Mitra in the southern niche is badly mutilated with the head, right arm and left forearm missing. He stands in a rigid pose on a lotus pedestal. Both Surya images are carved in chlorite and, though exquisitely carved in respect to adornment and drapery, are overly stiff and lifeless. The image originally occupying the western niche is possibly the one found in the *nata-mandira* (dance hall) of the adjacent Surya Deul when it was cleared of debris and sand at the beginning of the twentieth century. Surya is elaborately bejewelled and stands on his chariot with the seven horses carved on its face. Aruna, depicted from the waist up, is at the feet of Surya while small images of Dandi

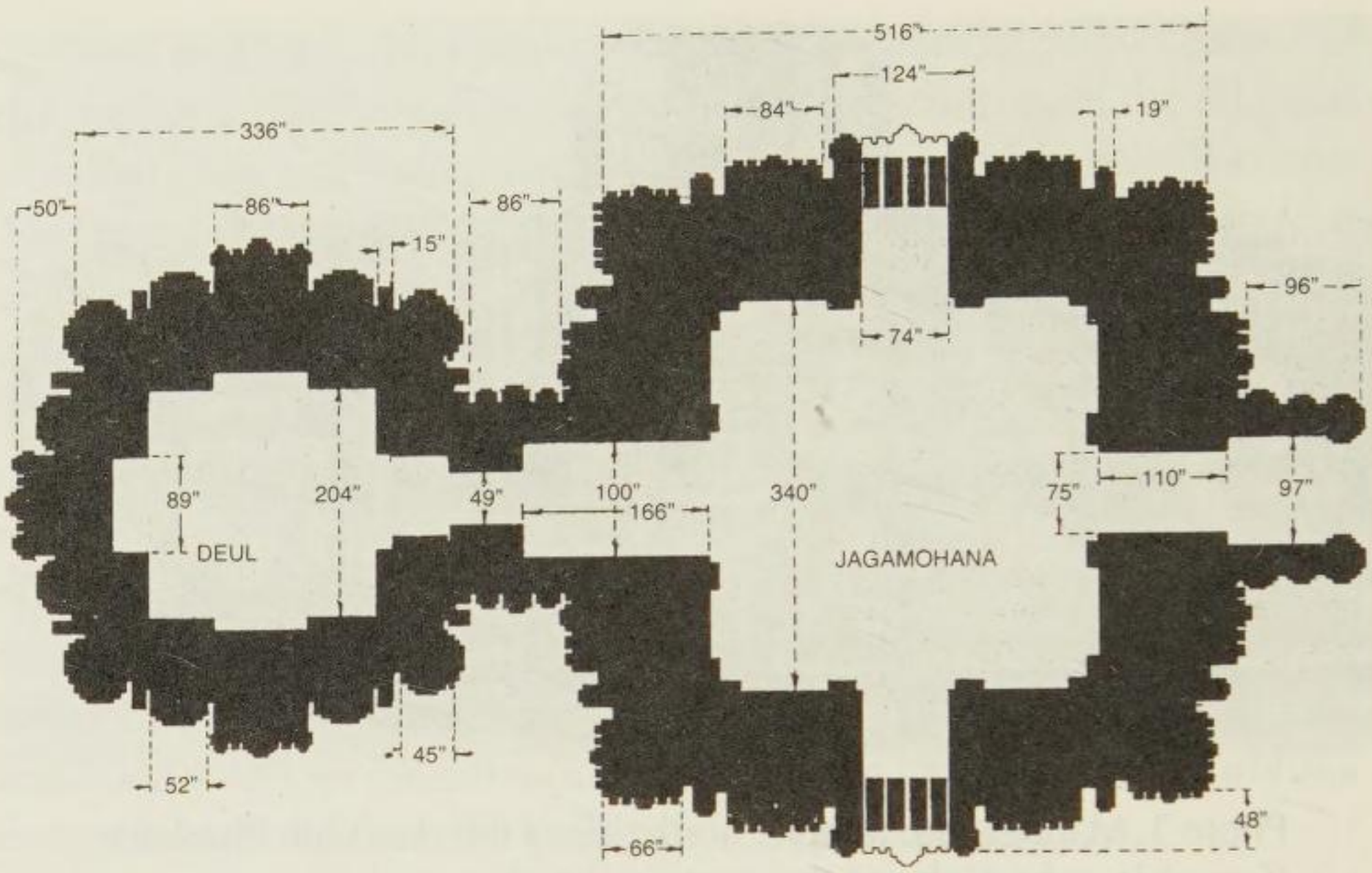


Fig. V. Plan of Mahagayatri (Mayadevi) Temple

and Pingala flank his right and left leg, respectively. Warriors stand in front of a khakhara-mundi on either side at the base while a female attendant stands above each mundi. The top of the backslab is carved with a trefoil-shaped *torana* edged with flames and crowned by a *kirtimukha*. At the base of the torana on the right is a warrior riding a horse while on the opposite side is a seated male playing a *vina*. The image is more beautifully carved than its counterparts and its iconographic programme is more complex.

Except for the parshva-devatas and the missing puja-image, the remaining cult images were carved of khondalite. The dikpalas are seated in *lalitasana* (with one leg pendent) on their mounts and are two-armed. Ishana, as an aspect of Shiva, has four arms. The most popular figure motifs *in situ* are the alasa-kanyas flanking the mundi designs of the lower jangha of the jagamohana. In general, their graceful and languid pose, body proportions, ornamentation, coiffure, and soft, warm smile are closely related to images of the eleventh–twelfth centuries. The mithuna motifs are confined primarily to the tala-garbhika niches of the pabhaga. They are tame in contrast to the more explicitly erotic images on the later Surya Deul.

Added in front of the jagamohana, probably when the Surya Deul

was being constructed, is a rectangular platform. It is the same height as the plinth supporting the temple though its decorative programme is different. On the long north and south sides the façade is decorated with a series of eighteen miniature shrines, nine wide khakhara-mundis alternating with nine thin vajra-mundis. The mundi niches are filled primarily with erotic motifs, some duplicating scenes on the Surya Deul. On the front of the platform there is a single, wide khakhara-mundi with thin flanking vajra-mundis on each side of a wide flight of steps. The khakhara-mundis house a doorguard in their niche while the vajra-mundi niches were filled with female attendants. The guards assume mirror image poses with one uplifted leg resting on a lotus and one arm crossing the body where it rests on a club placed vertically in front of the guard. This is the same pose assumed by the guards on the Surya Deul. This platform most likely supported an open-pillared pavilion or nata-mandira, possibly a temporary structure, which was utilized for various festive occasions.

Stylistically, the Mahagayatri temple forms one among a group of temples erected during the declining years of the Somavamshi period (*c.* CE 931–1110) and the opening years of the Ganga period (*c.* CE 1110–1434/5) that display a decorative programme characterized by excessive experimentation. The changes introduced are more in the form of elaboration of existing motifs rather than architectural innovations, an elaboration that often produces a crowded effect. The most notable changes are the increased number of pagas of varying size and the proliferation of tala-garbhika designs in the pabhaga.

Despite literary and popular references to an even earlier Sun-temple at the site, there is at present no supporting architectural evidence. Names applied to the existing temple, including Mayadevi, Chhayadevi, Ramachandi and Mahagayatri, appear to be modern fabrications, as are the legends associated with these names. The iconographic programme with images of Surya serving as parshva-devatas indicates that the temple was dedicated to him and not to a consort. In fact, as pointed out by K. S. Behera, there is no known precedent throughout India where a temple dedicated to a consort of Surya was erected next to a Sun Temple. It is possible, however,

upon completion of the Surya Deul of Narasimha I, that this earlier temple was converted to the worship of his Shakti, as it was popular to erect consort temples adjacent to pre-existing temples at this time. If so, the original puja image of the earlier Surya (Mahagayatri) temple, being already sanctified for over one hundred years, was likely transferred to the Surya Deul.

FOUR

King Narasimha I, Builder of the Surya Deul

The most ambitious undertaking during the Ganga period, and one of the most stupendous projects ever attempted in India, was the construction of the Surya Deul at Konark during the reign of Narasimha I. Although there is no mention of it in records of Narasimha himself, a copperplate inscription of Narasimha II, dating to CE 1295, speaks of this achievement, which is repeated in the laudatory verses of subsequent Ganga rulers:

> The king Narasimha was always engaged in benevolent deeds. Seeing his boundless charity, it was thought, as if Narasimha Vishnu himself had been born in this world in order to wash with the water of profuse charity, his hands formerly polluted by the blood of the king of the asuras, Hiranyakasipu . . . Shining day and night, and making Meru over to his Brahmanas in pious gifts . . . king Narasimha built at Kona-kona a place of great renown, a temple of the sun to live in with the other gods.

Narasimha I, the son of Anangabhima III (CE 1211–38), inherited as a youth difficult problems from his predecessors in respect to Orissa's relations with neighbouring states as also the constant threat of

Muslim invasion. The situation demanded that he should fight both in the south and in the north. In the south he thwarted invasions attempted by the Kakatiyas and retained lands won by earlier rulers. In the north he not only protected the country from Muslim invasion but also followed an aggressive policy against them by penetrating into the heart of Gauda in CE 1243 and defeating Malik Izzuddin Tughril-i-Tughan Khan at Katasin. In the succeeding year he invaded Muslim territories again and advanced right up to the capital, Gaud or Laksmanavati, plundering various districts before retiring to his own country before the approach of the monsoon. The defeat of the Sultan of Bengal by the joint efforts of Narasimha and his brother-in-law Paramardideva was so momentous that the Muslim historians could not suppress the fact and a brief reference to the battle and to the heroic deeds of Paramardideva is included in the *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*. The rehabilitation and resettlement of the Muslim-oppressed *sanyasis* of Radha and Gauda in the Bhubaneswar area by Narasimha after his conquest of Bengal is described in an inscription on the wall of the jagamohana of the Lingaraja temple. Malik Ikhtiyaruddin Yuzbak was soon appointed governor of Muslim Bengal, and with the aid of the court of Delhi, continued to wage war with Narasimha I, though with little success. Until Bengal obtained autonomy under the descendants of Bilbun, Orissa remained virtually unmolested and in fact even annexed the southern districts of Western Bengal such as Midnapur, Howrah, and Hooghly. Orissa thus witnessed the zenith of prosperity under Narasimha I. Relative peace prevailed throughout his kingdom, extending from the Ganges in the north to the Godavari in the south. Matrimonial alliances with the Haihayas also secured the western borders. It is during this peaceful interlude that Narasimha turned his attention to constructing the Surya Deul at Konark.

Narasimha I was renowned for his charitable activities and it is obvious that he was a great builder as well as a great warrior. From various inscriptions and traditions he is associated with the construction of the Gopinatha temple at Remuna, the Shikhareshvara temple on Kapilas hill, and the Varaha-Narasimha temple at Simhachalam; construction of the latter was assigned to one of his generals. Various sources credit Narasimha with the construction of the Surya Deul though no exact date is available either for its beginning

or for its completion. In the *Madala Panji* it is recorded that Narasimha laid the foundation of the temple in his third anka. After appointing Shivai Samantara Mahapatra as superintendent for building the temple, he undertook an expedition to the south that engaged him for twelve years. Elsewhere in this same text it is related that, at the age of eighteen, he had to fight in the south for three years as commander-in-chief of his father's army, from which he returned with many treasures. This booty, his mother suggested, should be used for building a very large temple to the Sun god at Konark, the only among the important four kshetras that was still without a big shrine. It thus appears that work on the project commenced while Narasimha was still a crown prince. This is repeated in the *Baya Chakada* where it is mentioned that he took more than 500 workmen who had been recruited for the construction of the temple to join him in the Warangal campaign. It is also stated that although building operations started in the fifth anka of his reign, planning and quarrying of stones had begun some six years earlier. It is further stated that a certain number of workmen requested to be released before the temple was finished, saying that they had served the Raja for over twelve years in war and peace.

It is obvious that the construction of such a colossal structure was a unified effort by artisans recruited throughout Orissa. Popular tradition, as recorded by Abu'l Fazl in the *Ain-i-Akbari* (*c.* CE 1581), has it that the revenue for twelve years from the entire country was defrayed for the construction. This appears to be an exaggerated conception of the vast resources that were for many years lavished on its construction. Most of the expenses, according to the *Baya Chakada* and the *Madala Panji*, came from Narasimha's personal wealth, which was greatly increased by booty brought back from his numerous campaigns. According to the *Baya Chakada* work commenced on the temple towards the end of the fifth anka of Narasimha's reign and ended some twelve years, ten months, and fourteen days later during his eighteenth anka. The image of Surya accordingly was installed on Sunday, the seventh day of *Magha Shukla paksha* in CE 1258. This date is corroborated in the *Madala Panji* where it is recorded that work started in his fifth anka with 1200 workmen. On the other hand, as pointed out by Boner, the eighteenth anka of Narasimha, if he ascended

the throne in CE 1238 as most scholars agree, would fall between September 1251 and September 1252, 13 ankas working out to ten actual years with the fifth anka falling in CE 1241. Elsewhere in the *Madala Panji* it is recorded that the temple was begun in his second or third anka and was consecrated in the twenty-second anka. Although ten years, or even twelve years, seems an incredibly short time for the construction of such a mammoth undertaking, the technical process of construction was apparently organized with the utmost precision and foresight. According to passages in the *Baya Chakada*, Narasimha kept prodding the *sutradhara* to speed up the work, as he wanted it to be consecrated when Magha Shukla saptami, the great festival of the Sun god, would fall on a Sunday. On that auspicious day, at sunrise, he wanted the first puja to be performed inside the temple. In spite of difficulties, such as those that arose at the moment of setting the *kalasha* on top of the main shrine, all of the construction ceremonies were apparently completed in proper time. The tradition that it took twelve years to complete the temple could be accurate, considering its colossal size, though the number 'twelve' is obviously auspicious. This is also the number of years of severe penance undertaken by Samba after which he was cured of leprosy, and the age of the son of the sutradhara who supposedly fixed the kalasha in place, while the number of craftsmen working on the temple are fabricated at 1200 or 12,000.

As the temple was nearing completion, the task of fixing the kalasha in place baffled the 1200 *shilpins* working on the temple. The king, restless and anxious that the temple should be completed, threatened to cut off the heads of all 1200 if by the next day the temple was not completed. In one of the versions of the story of Dharmapada, who had been born soon after his father the sutradhara was summoned to Konark to begin work on the temple, the boy came to the site in search of his father and, learning of the difficulty, he completed the task in one night. At first happy, the shilpins soon became sad, fearing that if a small boy could fix the pinnacle which 1200 shilpins were unable to accomplish for such a long time, they would still be punished by the king. They thus approached the sutradhara and demanded that he choose between his own son and the fate of his 1200 followers. Dharmapada realized the dilemma facing his father and in order to save him and the 1200 shilpins he went up to the top of the temple

and jumped into the Chandrabhaga river flowing near the temple. In another version the father, sorrrowfully declaring his preference for his fellow workers, climbed to the top of the temple, where his son was still working, and hurled him down to the pavement below. A curse then fell on the work and the jagamohana was left unfinished up to the final kalasha. These stories about a twelve-year old boy completing the work first appear at the beginning of the twentieth century, as noted by K. S. Behera, but have become so popular that they are now literally an integral aspect of the annals of the monument.

The purpose of erecting this colossal temple is unknown though various theories have been proposed, including some legendary ones gleaned from puranic stories involving the vanity of Samba. The son of Krishna and Jambavati, Samba was overly proud of his handsome appearance and once ridiculed the divine sage Narada. The mischief-making Narada devised a scheme to avenge himself. At an opportune moment he led Samba to the secret bathing-place of his stepmothers, where Samba could observe the sixteen thousand *gopis* (cowgirls) leisurely lounging in various states of undress. Recognizing his presence, they became excited with his personal charm and wanted to enjoy his company. Narada then stealthily led Krishna to the spot. Incensed at his son's apparent lack of propriety, Krishna cursed him to be smitten with leprosy, which would obviously affect his beauty. Panic-stricken, Samba explained his innocence but, once pronounced, the curse could not be withdrawn. Feeling pity for his frightened son, Krishna advised him to proceed to Mitravana, near the Chandrabhaga river, where he was to propitiate Surya, the healer of all skin diseases. After twelve years of severe penance, the Sun god appeared momentarily on the waves of the river, leaving behind a white lotus as the mark of his favour. When Samba bent to pick up the flower, he saw his reflection on the water and instantly his beauty was restored and he was free of the dreadful disease. In gratitude, he decided immediately to erect a temple in honour of the god. While bathing in the Chandrabhaga the following day he discovered an image of the god, which had been fashioned out of Surya's body by the divine architect Vishvakarma. Samba installed this image in a temple built by him in Mitravana.

In another version of the legend, it was the sage Durvasa who led

Krishna to witness a scene of dalliance between Samba and the gopis. Krishna, enraged by his son's actions, cursed him to be inflicted with leprosy. Samba asked for forgiveness and Krishna repented, advising him to propitiate the Sun god on the banks of the Chandrabhaga at Maitreyavana. Samba, through penance, pleased Surya and the latter appeared before him and granted him two boons. The first cured him of his disease and the second gave him a statue of the Sun god retrieved from the river. As directed by Surya, he installed the image in a temple. When the local priests refused to perform the daily rituals at the temple, Samba imported some Magha brahmins from Shakadvipa who not only performed the rituals, but also popularized the cult of Sun worship in this part of the country. In the *Bhavishya Purana* the original locale of the episode was near the Chandrabhaga, a tributary of the Indus, and the site (modern Multan) in the Punjab came to be known as Sambapura. The shifting of the legend to Konark, as indicated, was obviously done at a later time when Konark became a centre of Sun-worship, the motive behind it being to augment the sanctity and fame of the new centre by making it the site of Samba's original temple.

This legend based on the widespread belief that the Sun god was a healer of diseases, especially leprosy, led to the theory that Narasimha himself suffered from leprosy. Upon being cured of this affliction by the grace of the Sun god, he built a temple in gratitude. Or it is said that he built the temple out of gratitude upon being blessed with a son by the boon of the Sun god, the belief being that one can obtain a son by propitiating Surya. This theory receives some support from the fact that he named his son Bhanudeva, the first solar name in the royal line. In literature and tradition, Narasimha was referred to as Languala Narasimha. The exact significance of the epithet *langulia* (one having a tail) is not known though it has been speculated that perhaps he had a protuberance of the spinal cord, or a physical deformity of some kind, which he wanted to get removed by building a temple dedicated to Surya. It hardly seems likely that a pejorative epithet would be applied to such an energetic ruler and, as pointed out by K. S. Behera, his epithet 'Jagadekamalla' as given in the *Bhaktibhagavata* (CE 1510) suggests that he was a healthy person. He was renowned for his strength and skill in all athletic exercises and

it may be that 'the epithet became popular as the king was compared to an angry lion which usually shows a raised tail'. In the *Ekavali* of Vidyadhara, a court poet of Narasimha, the king is eulogized as a great builder, a great patron of learning, and a great lover, and is compared as well to the lion *avatar* of Vishnu. Numerous references in the text are made to Kamala (the goddess of fortune) embracing the king, that is, as sojourning in his kingdom. It is also probable that the popularity of Lakshmi-Narasimha images in Orissa is due to this king. The presence of Narasimha-Vishnu in these images, though ostensibly representing the lion avatar of Vishnu, can equally be considered as a veiled reference to king Narasimha, in whose kingdom the goddess of fortune (Lakshmi) has taken up residence.

Most likely the principal motives for erecting such a colossal structure were both devotional and to acquire fame. The very construction of a great temple in itself confers supreme merit and all manner of perfections; the builders (king and shilpin) being instantly liberated from whatever sins were committed in this and in all previous lives. As stated in the *Shilpa Prakasha* (II.736–7), a controversial medieval Orissan tantric text on temple architecture;

> That King, who for his fame [kirti rupena] erects a monument, . . . with a pure mind, in an auspicious moment, and who completes the work according to rules without obstructions, will go to the abode of Shiva.

That his successors considered his construction of the temple to be a pious act to attain religious merit seems implied in their inscriptions ascribing the temple to him. Another interpretation of the relevant verse quoted earlier reads: 'He built for the Sun a temple in order that he [the king] would live in heaven with other gods by virtue of this religious act.' Indeed, even by the attainment of mastery in art he will not have to undergo another birth. That Narasimha had attained such mastery seems evident from the *Ekavali* where he is called 'Shilpajna' (Knower of Shilpas). Equally cogent is the belief that the temple was erected by Narasimha to exhibit his power, prestige, and opulence. The *Gangavamshanucharita* of Vasudeva Somayaji (eighteenth century) relates that Anangabhima III had built the Jagannatha temple and to surpass him as well as earn undying fame, Narasimha built the Sun-temple in an over-ambitious scale. It may

also have been built as a memorial to commemorate his successful military campaigns against the Muslims, particularly as construction apparently began soon after his military successes against them and there is a preponderance of military activities appearing in the decorative programme of the temple. Even Abu'l Fazl states that it is a 'mighty memorial to posterity'. The king, by constructing such a monument, will not only attain liberation (moksha), but in addition will always have peace, wealth, and sons in this world. The temple was thus as much a testimony to the glory of the king as an able administrator and a great leader, outdoing even his famous father, as it was to his religious devotion and it effectively insured his immortality, on earth as well as in heaven. As stated in the *Shilpa Prakasha* (II.741–33):

> When a Raja, endowed with a hundred kingdoms, with hundreds of villages, with a hundred bags of gold, when the best king with a hundred wives of golden limbs, with the power of a hundred arms, does not erect a temple that will stand forever, all this will be fruitless. All things, wealth, grain and children [happiness] vanish with the passing of time, everything vanishes with time, only a monument will last forever.

Although Narasimha I does not credit himself with constructing this colossal temple, this is in keeping with established convention. There are very few commemorative inscriptions on Orissan temples and the paucity of inscriptional evidence crediting kings with building specific temples seems to imply, as suggested by K. C. Panigrahi, that the temples were considered state property rather than the property of those kings during whose reigns they were built. In the few cases where there are such inscriptions, the actual donor is generally not the king but a lesser member of the ruling family or a subordinate ruler. Even with the adoption of Jagannatha as the Supreme Lord of Orissa and the visualization of the king as his representative or deputy, the Imperial Gangas did not leave any trace of their *dharmakirti* (sacred deeds) in temples built by them. This restriction was relaxed when speaking of a temple constructed by an ancestor. Beginning in the late eleventh century, however, the Orissan kings often circumvented this proscription by having their own images and activities included in the iconographical programme. This left little doubt as to their deified

Photo 4. Surya Deul: detail of King Narasimha I receiving the garland of command from his guru in front of a Mahishamardini-Purushottama-Linga trinity, from an *anartha* niche of the lower storey of the *deul* (0.9m by 0.7m)

status and as to who was responsible for the construction of the temple. From the inscription on the Shobhaneshvara Shiva temple at Niali we also know that female singers attached to temples recited individual deeds of the kings. The decorative programme of the Surya Deul is replete with images of the king and his guru engaged in various everyday activities, including receiving the *ajnamala* (garland of command) from the neck of the Sun god. By incorporating his image into the programme, Narasimha was following established convention.

FIVE

Collapse and Later Conservation

Although some doubts had been raised in the past as to whether or not the temple was ever finished and whether the presiding deity was ever consecrated, these uncertainities have been dispelled. The spouted pedestal of the enshrined image within the sanctum, for example, bears indubitable signs of having been in religious use for a considerable time. There also are no signs of sinking or an unequal settlement of the plinth because of a weak foundation, supposedly causing the collapse of the sanctuary even before completion. Included among the earliest references to the temple and its presiding deity is one in the *Brahma Purana* (26.46–7). While describing the merits of the kshetra of Konaditya, it prescribes that the pilgrim should

> proceed to the temple of the Sun god taking flowers with him. After entering the shrine he shall circumambulate thrice and worship the Sun god . . . He shall offer scents, sweet and fragrant flowers, lights, incense and food-offerings. He shall prostrate before the deity lying flat on the ground . . .

This appears to substantiate that the temple had been completed and that the image was consecrated, provided that this refers to the temple built by Narasimha I and not the earlier temple. Similar verses

describing the sanctity of Konark appear in the fifteenth-century *Tirtha-chintamani* of Vachaspati Mishra while the (Oriya) *Mahabharata* of Sarala Dasa contains numerous references to Konark as a *tirtha* visited by thousands of people on the occasion of the Magha Shukla saptami festival. The *Kapila Samhita*, a Sanskrit text of the Suryavamsha period, describing the holy places of Orissa, devotes the entire sixth chapter to Konark, mentioning even a car-festival. That the spire was intact and the temple was in worship some three hundred years after its construction is confirmed by Abu'l Fazl's tribute to the monument. This contradicts the popular tradition, recorded in the *Madala Panji*, that the temples were damaged and desecrated during the invasion in 1568 by Kalapahada. That the temple was still in worship in the early seventeenth century is suggested by another entry in the *Madala Panji*. This records a survey of the temple, along with the Lingaraja and Jagannatha, and a report on the expenditures for worship and on the contents of their storerooms and treasuries. This also indicates that the kalasha and lotus-finial must still have been in place in CE 1610.

Evidence that the temple was no longer in active worship in CE 1626 appears in the *Bahr-al-asrar* of Mahmud Amir Wali who visited both Puri and Konark. In respect to the Sun temple at Konark he mentions that the Hindus no longer worship the Sun god, that the site had been deserted and the premises were partially engulfed by drifting sand. That the lofty temple itself was mostly intact, however, is seemingly implied by his statement that 'a Mughal who was known for his marksmanship and physical strength tried to shoot an arrow to hit the top but the arrow could not go beyond the half of the temple's height, and fell down in the sandy ground'. He additionally mentions that the roof (of the jagamohana) was spanned with twenty-two iron beams and at the top of the spire was a single piece of lodestone approximately 100 *maunds* in weight. In a later entry of the *Madala Panji* is recorded the catastrophe leading to the eventual collapse of the spire. It is at this time (CE 1628), that the colossal *gaja-simha* of the eastern façade fell, crumbling the eastern wall under its weight and breaking the hands of the puja image, 'whereupon the entire country fell into great affliction'. Another extract records that the kalasha and lotus-finial were no longer in place, having been plundered by the *yavana* ruler Bakhar Khan, and that the puja-image, called

Maitraditya-Virinchideva, had been removed to the Niladrimahotsava temple within the precincts of the Jagannatha temple at Puri. It is thus not clear if the puja-image was still enshrined when the spire collapsed. Supposedly the magnetic iron rod which held the kalasha in position was still intact. The colossal size of the temple, and its proximity to the sea, attracted the attention of sailors plying the Bay of Bengal and it served as an excellent navigational landmark. As early as 1676 it was referred to as the 'Black Pagoda' in European accounts while the Jagannatha temple at Puri, in active use and receiving periodical white paintings, was known as the 'White Pagoda'.

Although the eventual destruction of the spire began with the fall of the projecting gaja-simha, portions of its southern and western walls remained upright into the nineteenth century. When visited by Sterling in 1822, he relates that when viewed from a distance it resembled 'a ship under sail'. Fergusson prepared a drawing of it in 1837 and estimated the height to be about 42.7–45.7m. Captain Markham Kittoe visited the site the following year and reported that 'one corner is still standing to a height of 80 or 100 feet and has (at a distance) the appearance of a crooked column.' This strip remained upright until decimated by a strong gale in October 1848. By the time of R. L. Mitra's visit in 1868 the sanctuary was reduced to

> an enormous mass of stones studded with a few *pipal* trees here and there, and harboring snakes, from the dread of which few care to approach it. The only work of art prominently noticeable on it . . . was a figure of a rampant lion, which had projected from the southern face of the tower.

Although the temple apparently remained in official worship almost until the fall of the gaja-simha, the weakening of the balance, which held the gaja-simha in place, was most likely accelerated by the plundering of the kalasha prior to CE 1628, an act that probably loosened the stones of the *khapuri* and hastened the collapse.

Included among the legends attempting to explain the cause of its destruction is the popular story that an immense lodestone lodged on its summit had the effect of drawing ashore vessels passing near the coast. The inconvenience was such that, during the Mughal rule, the crew of a ship landed at a distance and stealthly attacked the temple, scaled the spire, and carried off the lodestone. Following this violation

of sanctity, the priests removed the image of the deity to Puri and from that date the temple became deserted and went rapidly to ruin. In another version it was Portuguese sailors who took away the lodestone. In still other stories it was believed that the kalasha was dislodged because it was thought to be made of solid gold, or that it contained wealth. In the *Madala Panji* it is recorded that, in order to save the ruby-studded lotus-emblem from the top of the spire from being plundered by Kalapahada, it was removed and deposited in the Jagannatha temple. According to an unpublished extract mentioned above, however, the kalasha and the lotus-finial were carried away shortly before 1628 by the troops of Bakhar Khan. Elsewhere in the *Madala Panji* it is recorded that Keshomaru (a Hindu) carried away the lotus-finial though no date is mentioned.

Still other explanations blame the temple collapse on natural causes such as lightning, earthquakes, or tidal waves. There are also stories inspired by the profusion of erotic imagery on the temple walls and the supposed immorality of the Sun god, which suggest that its destruction was a punishment for moral laxity. According to a later interpolated story in the (Oriya) *Mahabharata* of Sarala Dasa, Indra and Surya violated Ahalya, the beautiful wife of the sage Gautama. Incensed, Gautama cursed Surya and his temple collapsed. In a related story in the nineteenth-century *Chandrabhaga* of Radhanath Ray, the temple collapsed as a result of the curse of the sage Sumanyu. Accordingly, at the *Pushyabhisheka* festival of Jagannatha, a quarrel broke out between Surya and Kama, and Kama was only waiting for an opportunity for revenge. The occasion came when Surya became enamoured by the beauty of Chandrabhaga, the daughter of Sumanyu who was spending his days in meditation at the seashore near Beleshvara. Smitten by the arrows of Kama, Surya fell in love with Chandrabhaga, but she developed a feeling of aversion for him and, pursued by him, she entered the ocean and disappeared forever. Sumanyu, learning of the activities of Surya, angrily cursed him and as a result his temple collapsed.

In addition to weathering effects, including cyclones, sandstorms, the effects of the saline sea breeze, and vegetation taking root on the deserted temple, the desecration of the jagamohana by local inhabitants also hastened its gradual destruction. This was noted

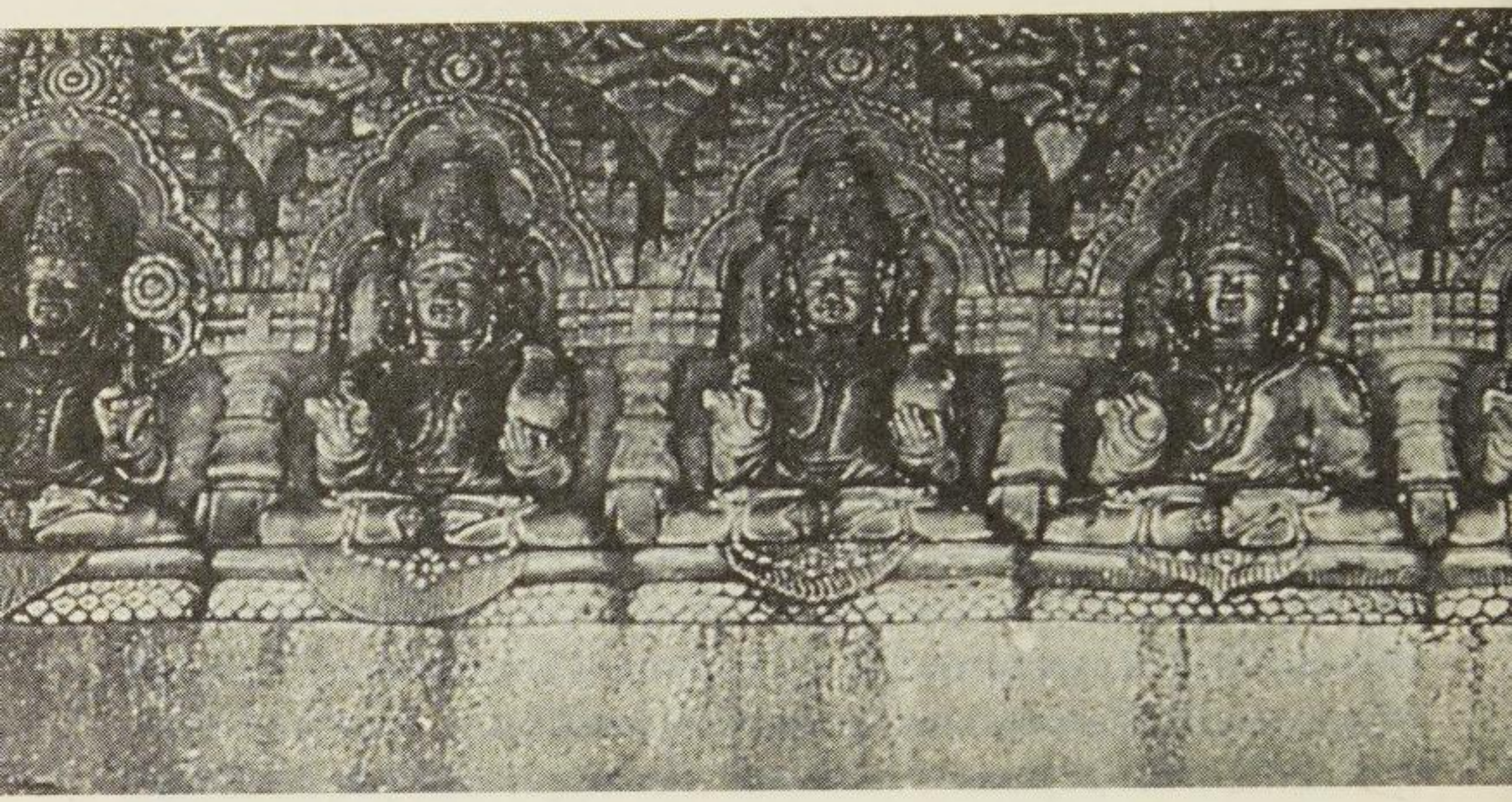
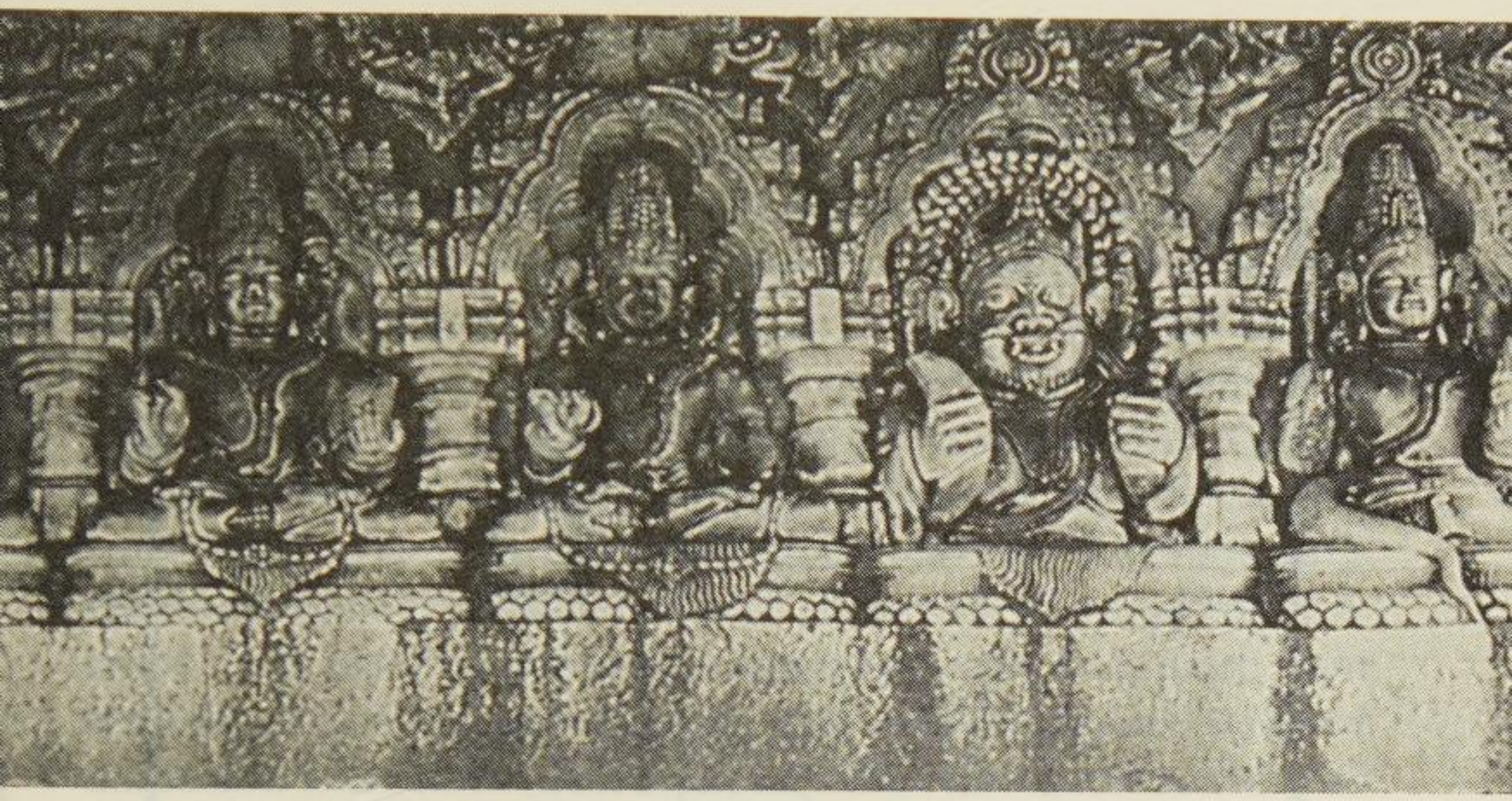


Photo 5. Surya Deul: detached *navagraha* slab from the east portal, now housed in a special shed outside the northeast corner of the compound

by Stirling as early as 1825 when he reported that the iron clamps holding the stones together were forcibly removed while officers of the Maratha government 'beat down a part of the walls, to procure materials for some insignificant temples at Puri'. The Aruna pillar was removed to Puri by the Marathas and the temple itself, as remarked by Fergusson, narrowly escaped being employed to build a lighthouse on False-point. The Marine Committee at Cuttack opposed its demolition, fortunately, due to its importance as a navigational landmark. Sculptures, however, were continuously being plundered from the site, even as late as 1893 when eleven images were removed to Calcutta and presented to the Indian Museum. In the eighteenth century it was widely believed, as mentioned by R. L. Mitra, that the nata-mandira was dismantled by the Marathas and removed to Puri. It was thus set up as the *bhoga-mandapa* (refectory) of the Jagannatha temple, 'its site at Konark now being indicated by a huge mass of rubbish overgrown with jungle'. In 1837 the Raja of Khurda removed numerous sculptures to his residence. Although he had written permission to remove some stones lying on the ground with which to repair part of the Jagannatha temple, it is evident that he removed



sculptures from the temple itself. In Kittoe's report of the following year he laments that

> the masons pick out the figures and throw them down to take their chance of being broken to pieces (which most of them are): such they leave on the spot, those that escaped uninjured are taken away.

Although the Raja pulled down the large navagraha slab from over the eastern entrance, he was directed 'to remove no more stones of any kind' before he could remove it to Puri. According to an officer of the Bengal Army, who made numerous visits to the site, it was removed with great difficulty which was compounded by the death of a workman due to falling scaffolding. In 1867, the Asiatic Society of Bengal attempted to remove it to the Indian Museum but managed to move it only about 300 metres. R. L. Mitra, on his visit to the site, reports that the supporting 6.4m iron beam was lying in front of the entrance while the 6.1m long navagraha slab was lying on a truck where it had been abandoned. In 1892, a second attempt was made to remove the slab to Calcutta. To make it lighter for carriage, the stone was sliced longitudinally into halves, reducing the original thickness of 1.22m to 0.46m, with the carved front slice placed on the specially-made truck, but it was carried only a few yards further. Due to the objection of the local people on religious grounds, the

WITHDRAWN

navagraha (nine planetary deities) being the object of worship in the Magha Shukla saptami festival, further attempts at removal were abandoned in 1893. In 1907, a thatched shed was constructed around the slab where it remained until it was shifted to a sculpture shed erected in 1915. In 1953, it was removed to a new sculpture shed beyond the northeast corner of the enclosure. The weight of the slab is reported to have been over 26 tons.

When visited by Fergusson in 1837, the massive pillars of the deul dividing the floor of the interior into a nave and two aisles were still standing. The lower ceiling, however, had already collapsed and was piled-up on the floor when Baba Brahmachari carted away images from the ruins in the mid-eighteenth century. When R. L. Mitra visited the site the pillars were lying fragmented on the pile of rubble on the floor along with numerous iron beams, while other iron beams were still projecting from the walls in a precarious manner. Despite its rapid decay and suggestions for conservation, not a single rupee had been spent on its preservation until 1881 when the vegetation that covered the roof was cleared. In the following two years, the colossal pairs of elephants, war-horses and the gaja-simhas, lying fallen amidst debris but originally flanking the three portals, were mounted on masonry platforms erected some distance in front of their respective staircases. They were set in the wrong positions with their faces towards the temple instead of away from it, as D. Mitra points out, while the gaja-simhas were erected on top of a mound, which when later cleared of sand revealed the nata-mandira. Despite repeated suggestions to restore or preserve the temple no major structural repair was undertaken until the end of the century. In December 1900, fully impressed with the necessity and urgency of structural repairs in the course of his visit, Sir John Woodburn (the Lieutenant Governor) issued an order to this effect.

Repairs began in 1901 and for the first time a well-planned campaign was launched to 'save the temple at any cost by adopting suitable measures with keen archaeological conscience' though, as pointed out by Behera, they discarded many carved fragments that are still scattered throughout the compound. The problems that faced the conservators, of course, were enormous, as the entire premises had to be cleared of stones, many of gigantic size, and sand. The

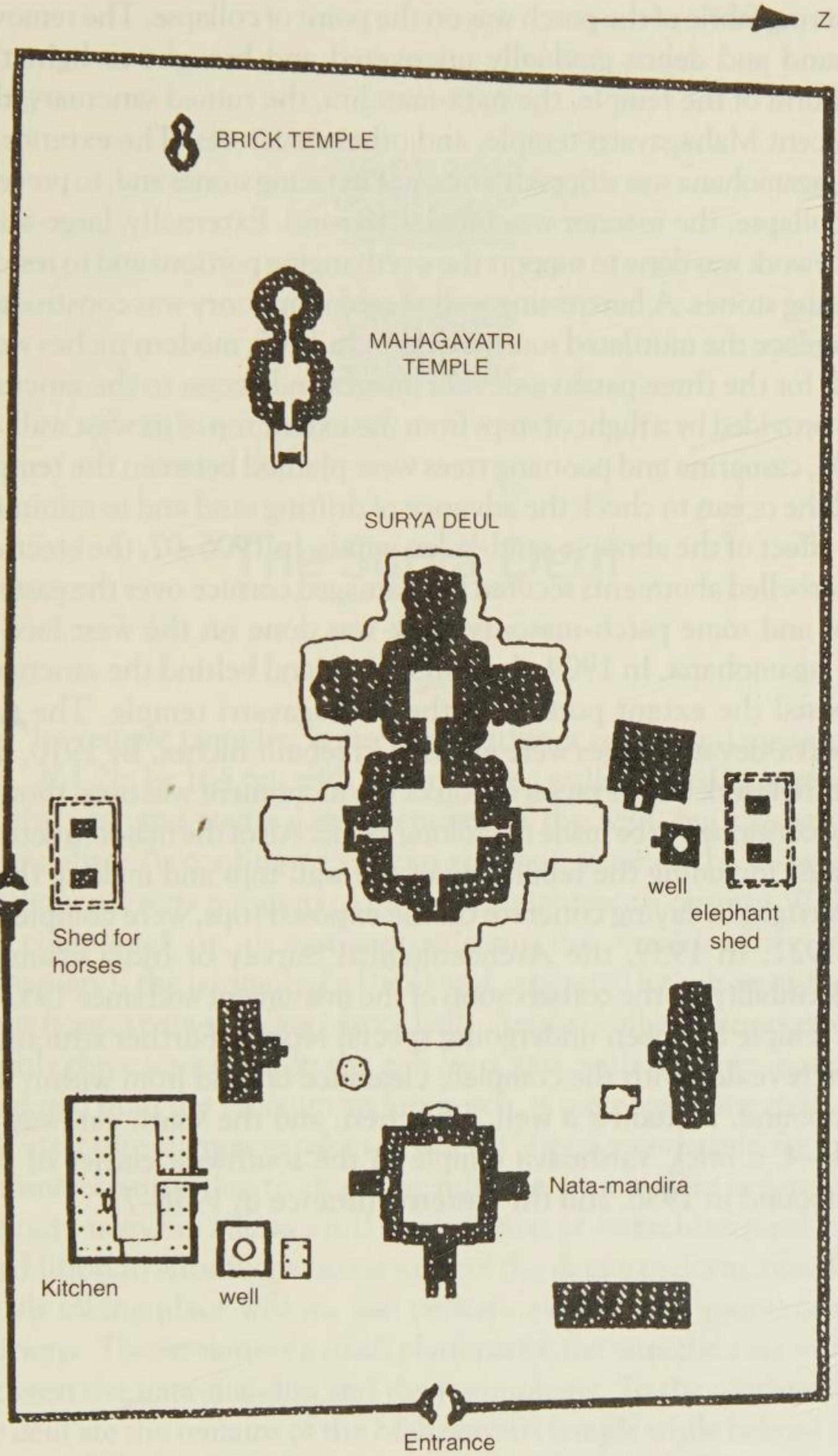


Fig. VI. Plan of the Surya Deul compound

tottering fabric of the porch was on the point of collapse. The removal of sand and debris gradually uncovered and brought to light the platform of the temple, the nata-mandira, the ruined sanctuary, the adjacent Mahagayatri temple, and other structures. The exterior of the jagamohana was stripped of many of its facing stones and, to prevent its collapse, the interior was filled with sand. Externally, large-scale stonework was done to support the overhanging portions and to restore missing stones. A buttressing wall of ashlar masonry was constructed to replace the mutilated southern door. In 1905, modern niches were built for the three parshva-devata images and access to the sanctum was provided by a flight of steps from the extant top of its west wall. In 1906, casuarina and poonang trees were planted between the temple and the ocean to check the advance of drifting sand and to minimize the effect of the abrasive sand-laden winds. In 1906–07, the erection of corbelled abutments secured the damaged cornice over the eastern door and some patch-masonry work was done on the west face of the jagamohana. In 1909, the removal of sand behind the sanctuary exposed the extant portion of the Mahagayatri temple. The two parshva-devata images were encased in rebuilt niches. By 1910, the essential work for the preservation of the monument was over, though steps continued to be made to prolong its life. All of the major structural repairs, including the rebuilding of the wall tops and making them watertight by laying concrete on the exposed tops, were completed by 1922. In 1939, the Archaeological Survey of India assumed responsibility for the conservation of the monument and since 1952–3 the temple has been undergoing special repairs. Further structures were revealed with the complete clearance of sand from within the compound, including a well, a kitchen, and the south gateway in 1953–4, a brick Vaishnava temple in the southwest corner of the compound in 1956, and the eastern entrance in 1956–7.

SIX

The Surya Deul

The temple complex is enclosed within a compound measuring 261.2m by 164.6m with the enclosing walls pierced by gateways on the east and south. Little remains of the wall, built mostly of khondalite. According to various sources, some of the crowning battlements were removed to Puri in the eighteenth century. Within the compound, on an east-west axis, are the remains of the deul (sanctuary), the jagamohana (hall) and, separated by a short distance at the front, a nata-mandira (dance hall). Aesthetically this arrangement of only three structures on the east-west axis, with the nata-mandira separated from the sanctum and its porch, is more satisfying than the four-structure alignment adopted when a bhoga-mandapa (refectory) became essential due to changing religious rituals. The isolation of the nata-mandira allows a full appreciation of its architectural form in addition to affording a better view of the dance performances and rituals taking place within, and perhaps even on the monumental stairways. The remains of a small platform for the musicians are visible between the nata-mandira and the jagamohana. To the southwest of the deul are the remains of the Mahagayatri temple while behind this structure is the brick Vaishnava temple. Foundations of other structures

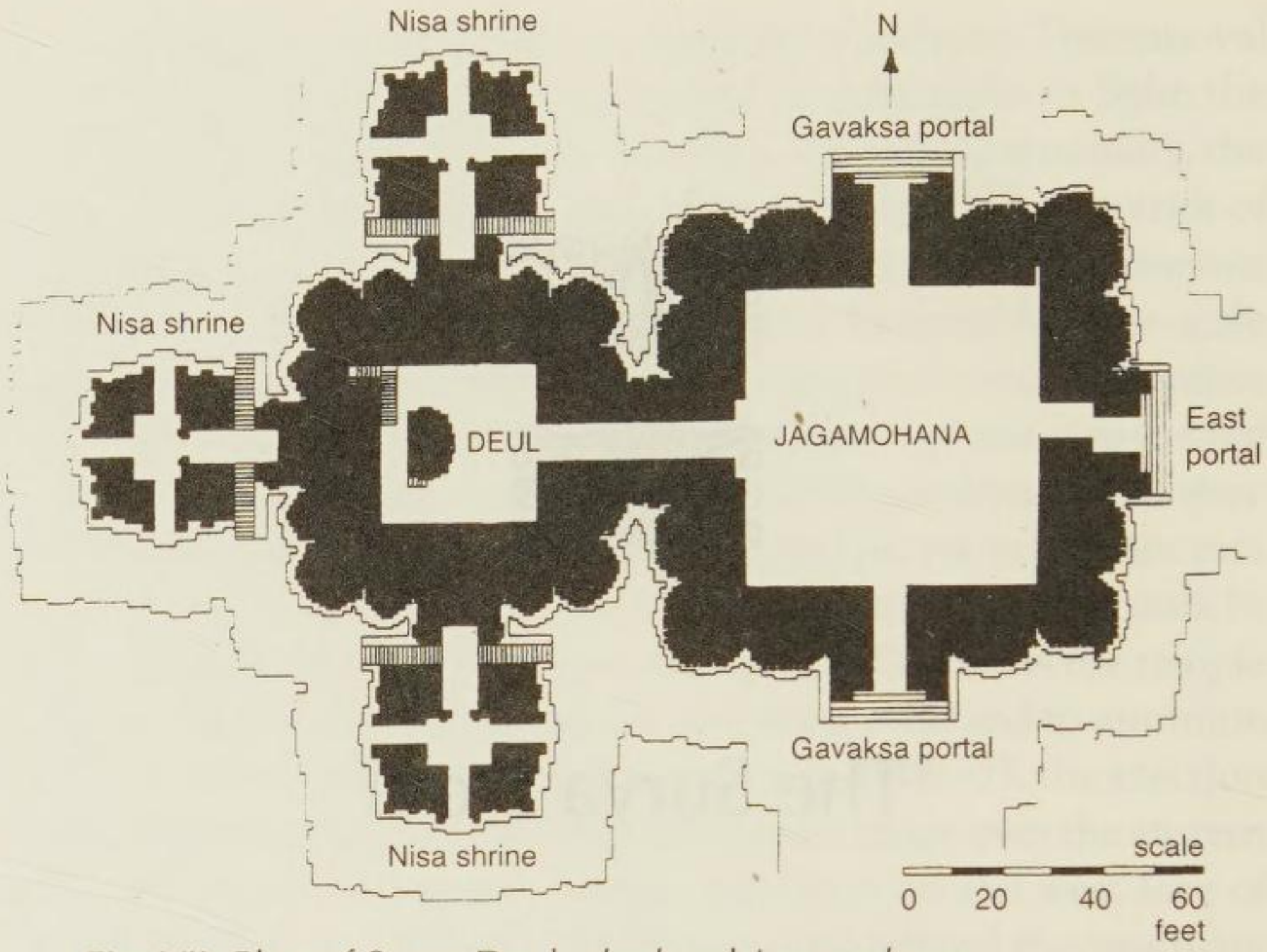


Fig. VII. Plan of Surya Deul: *deul* and *jagamohana*

within the compound include a *Parayatra-mandala* for ceremonial occasions and a *Nyasa-mandapa* for the consecration of the puja image. Next to the *Bajeni-mandapa* (musicians' platform) are two *yupas* (sacrificial pillars) that were driven into the ground when the temple was consecrated.

Three basic kinds of stone were employed in the structures—laterite, khondalite, and chlorite. All three, as detailed in K. S. Behera's monograph, were available in the general area, possibly near Naraj from where it was transported down the Mahanadi and Kushabhadra rivers, and from the Chilka coast and Lunghurt hill in Ganjam district from where it was transported to Konark by sea. Chlorite was restricted to the major doorframes with architraves, sculptures within mundi niches, the Aruna pillar, and the puja image. This stone combines hardness with easy workability and admits of very fine workmanship. Laterite was used in the invisible core of the platform, staircases, the foundations, and parts of the enclosing wall. It is an iron-rich and moderately porous variety of laterite that does not admit of any fine carving. The principal stone used for building the temple is a poor quality, easily weathered khondalite.

Platform

The jagamohana and deul, resting on a high platform, are conceived as a huge *ratha* (wheeled car) simulating the chariot of the Sun god pulled by seven horses. The horses are carved on the sides of the eastern staircase at the front of the jagamohana, four appearing on the south and three on the north. The platform, 3.9m in height, rests on a low *upana* (berm). The face of the berm is relieved with a frieze of elephants (said to number over 1700), military marches, hunting and caravan themes running continuously around the platform. Twenty-four wheels arranged in pairs, twelve on both the north and south sides, are carved at intervals on the face of the platform walls. As noted by Boner, they are consecrated to the twelve constellations or signs of the Zodiac that correspond to the twelve months of the Sun god's yearly course, beginning with Aries at the back and ending with Pisces at the front wheel. The richly ornamented wheels, 2.9m in diameter, contain eight major spokes and eight tie-rods. A medallion carved on each of the spokes is filled with small images while a larger scene is housed within the hubcap.

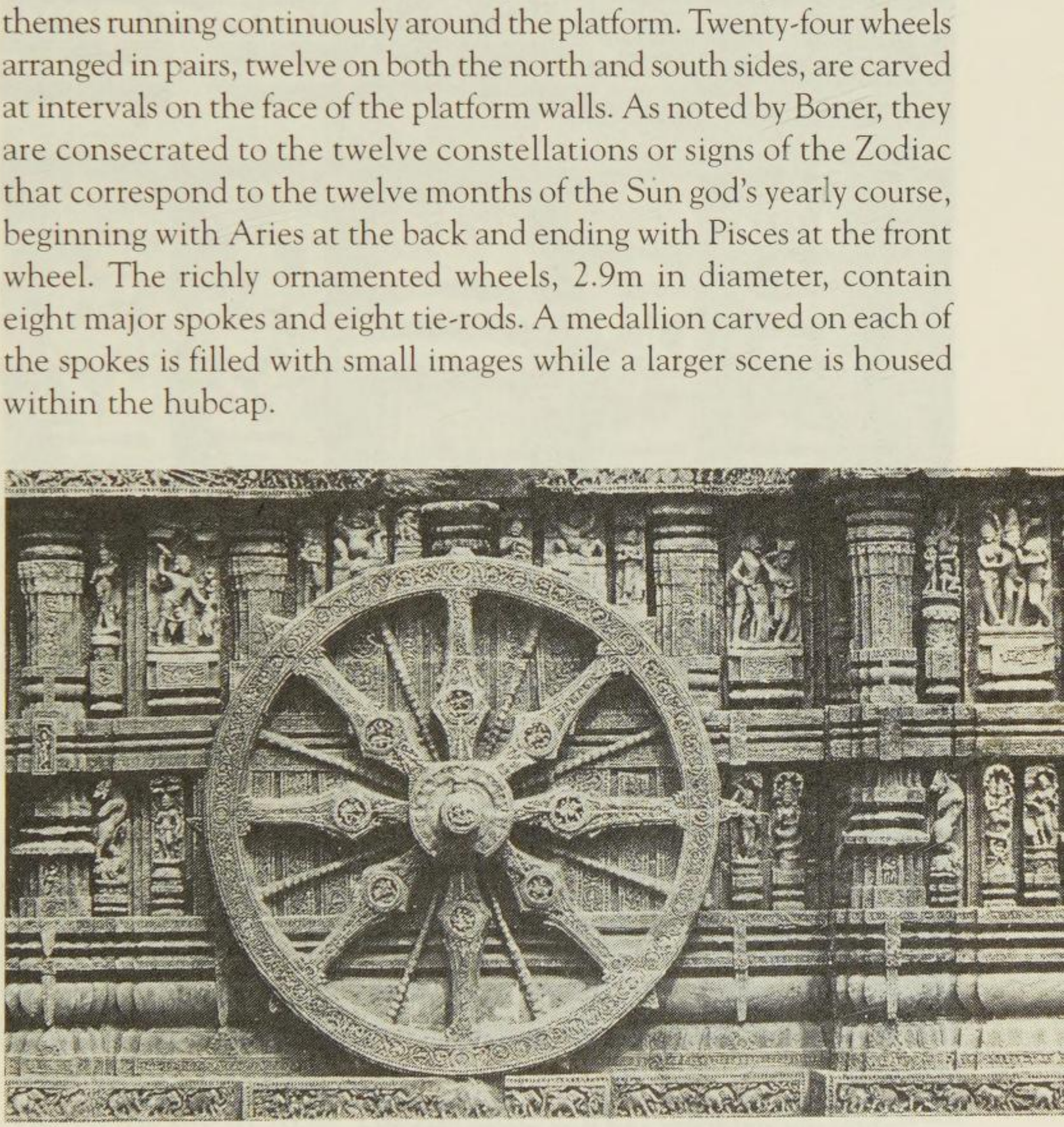


Photo 6. Surya Deul: detail of the platform wall showing one of the twenty-four wheels

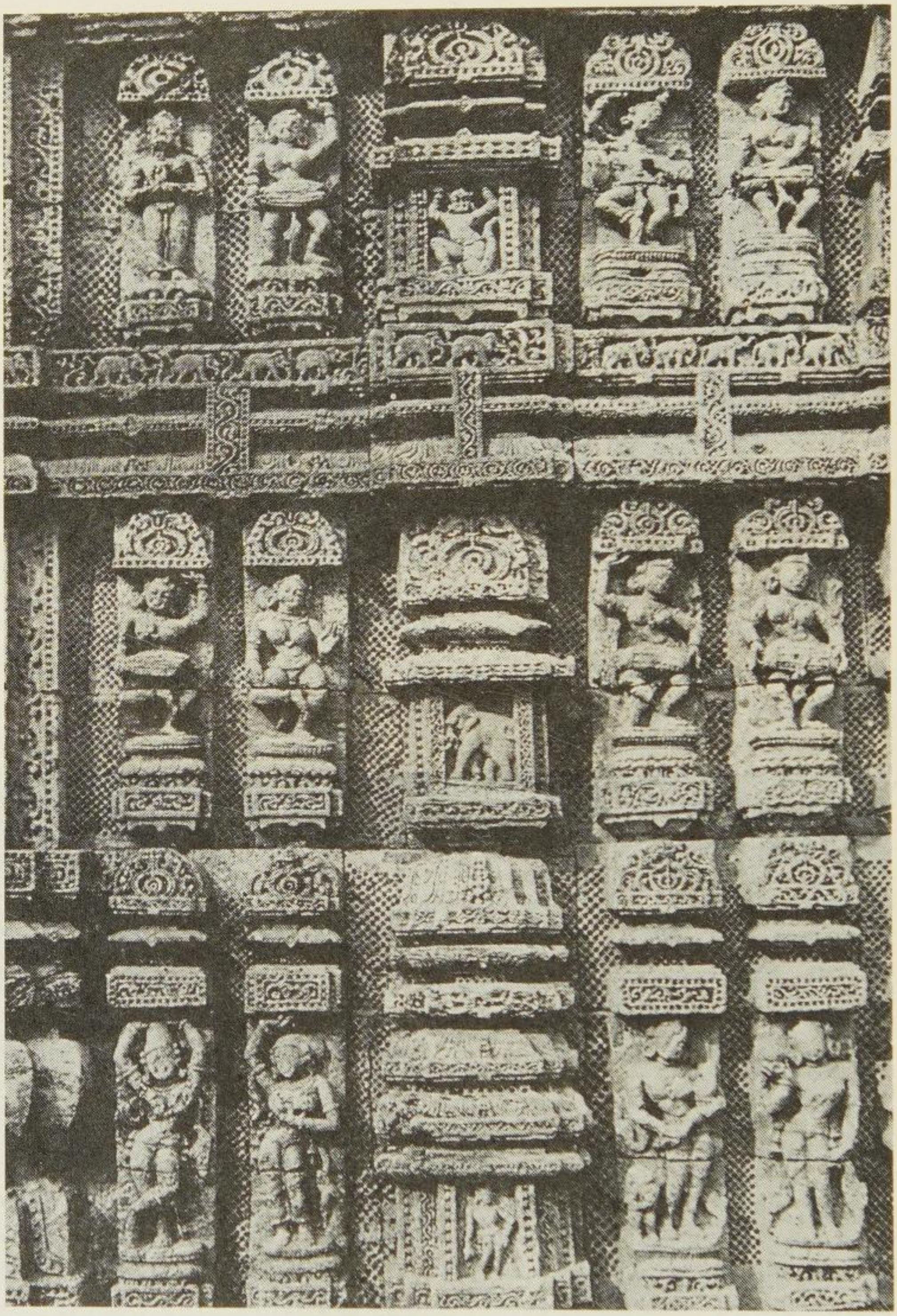


Photo 7. Surya Deul: *nata mandira*; detail of platform wall showing *pabhaga* and two-storey *jangha*

The pabhaga of the platform, 0.9m high, contains five mouldings of conventional design. The jangha is divided into two unequal storeys by a stringcourse consisting of three richly ornamented mouldings. The lower storey, 0.8m high, is decorated with khakhara-mundis of varying widths. They are flanked on each side by leonine motifs, serpents, kanyas (maidens), or mithunas (couples). The number of figures appearing between each mundi varies from one to three so that rigid standardization is eliminated in favour of undulating rhythms. In some of the major recessed areas of the platform the mundi designs are eliminated altogether in favour of a continuous succession of balusters appearing to be suspended in front of a perforated screen (honeycombed *jali*). The balusters are carved with *nagas* alternating with kanyas or mithunas. On the larger upper storey, 1.25m high, there are no mundi designs but sculptural panels of varying widths or balusters flanked by multi-faceted pilasters. These pilasters are aligned with only the widest mundi designs of the lower storey. The balusters are not necessarily aligned with those of the lower storey due to their varying width while the sculptural panels may extend the width of three lower-story balusters. The sculptural panels are particularly interesting and include a wide variety of motifs, some religious but most depicting secular scenes of everyday life, many centring on a king or royal figure. The upper storey is crowned by a *baranda* consisting of two mouldings separated by a recess. The lower edge of the mouldings is relieved with a frieze depicting primarily the pursuits of the warrior-class. The projecting upper surface is relieved with floral designs and animal motifs.

Bada Decoration

Except for the core of the foundation, base mouldings, and wall fragments, the deul is a mass of rubble. Modern masonry preserves the basic shape of the bada to the top of the parshva-devata niches in some places, however, while fragments of the upper jangha are still intact on the southeast corner facing the juncture. Portions of the walls up to a height of nearly 45.7m were standing when Fergusson visited the site in 1838. The drawing he had prepared is a view from the southeast, unfortunately, so that only a small section of the spire

is visible behind the jagamohana, the bada of the deul being mostly obscured. The bada is 20m square on the exterior and 10m on the interior, the walls thus being nearly 5.2m thick at the base. Despite its huge size, the bada is *pancha-ratha* in plan with *nisha* shrines erected in front of the raha niches.

The bada rests on a low berm, 0.6m high, consisting of two ornately decorated mouldings and a separating recess. The pabhaga, 4.3m high, consists of five mouldings. The vajra-mundi designs on the centre facet of the khura (hoof) moulding are filled with scenes centring on the life of the king. The jangha was divided into two storeys by a stringcourse consisting of three ornately decorated mouldings joined by a mundi design at the centre facet of each paga. The centre facet of the kanika- and anartha-pagas was designed as a khakharas- and pidha-mundi on the lower and upper storeys as conventional. The kanika niches housed the dikpalas (guardians of quarters) and their *patnis* (female counterparts) on the lower and upper storeys respectively. The niches of the anartha were filled primarily with images of Narasimha I on the lower storey while the niches of the upper storey were probably filled with various deities. Despite the colossal size of the temple, with each storey of the jangha being at least 4m high, the size of the mundi niches are relatively small. The niche images average only about 0.9m by 0.5m with the design of the mundi itself dominating the decorative programme. The anuraha recesses of the lower storey were filled with virala motifs and those of the upper storey with maidens or mithunas.

The frames of the raha niches housing the parshva-devatas are modern. The nisha shrines in front of the niches are badly dilapidated. Their walls and superstructure have not survived. The floor extends in front of the enshrined deities like a terrace. Beneath the floor is a complex of two oblong cells that were designed as a subsidiary sanctum and a front porch. The bada of this lower complex is *nava-ratha* (nine projecting pagas) in plan with the raha on all three sides providing the door-openings of the porch. The pabhaga consists of five mouldings. The jangha is divided into two storeys by a three-moulding stringcourse and is crowned by facing stones. The narrow kanika and pratiratha are designed as pilasters ornamented with kanyas carved in high relief.

The wider anartha has khakhara- and pidha-mundis on the lower and upper storeys, respectively. A narrow *stambha* decorated with a kanya flanks the mundis on each side. The mundi niches are filled with erotic figures and hunting scenes. The outer doorframes of the porches are relieved with scrollwork while the sanctum doorframe is decorated with doorguards at the base and a navagraha slab on the architrave. On the back wall of the sanctum is a large khakhara-mundi. The mundi niches of the south and west sanctums are empty. The inner room of the northern complex, D. Mitra suggests, was not used as a sanctum as the drain coming from the main sanctum pierces its back wall and passes through its floor and also that of the outer room.

Modern steps from the face of the western parshva-devata niche lead down to the northwest corner of the sanctum sanctorum. Sand and dry masonry, to prevent the structure from collapsing, block the original approach through the jagamohana. The sanctum walls, originally plastered, are made of ashlar-masonry and are mostly devoid of decoration. The floor, paved with chlorite slabs, slopes towards the middle portion of the northern wall where there is a channel to drain off the washings. The flat ceiling of the passage leading from the jagamohana to the sanctum is made of long slabs of stones supported by three iron beams. In the back wall of a chamber above this ceiling are rough steps giving access, through an opening made into the ceiling, to the chamber over the *garbha-muda* (bottom ceiling) of the sanctum.

Placed in the middle of the western side of the sanctum is a lavishly carved chlorite platform, measuring 3.3m by 2.2m at the base, which sustained the pedestal of the presiding deity. The platform rests on a low berm decorated with a frieze of elephants. The platform has a pabhaga, recessed jangha and projecting baranda. The pabhaga consists of three mouldings with a panel overlaying the bottom two on the centre projection. The panel on the east (front) is carved with a groom tenderly feeding a royal elephant, probably the elephant that brought the king to the temple for its ceremonial consecration. The recessed jangha is divided into two compartments or pavilions by short pilasters while the corners are decorated with *dopiccha-viralas* (leonine-monster with two hind parts). In the centre compartment on the east is a scene of the kneeling Narasimha I receiving the garland of command

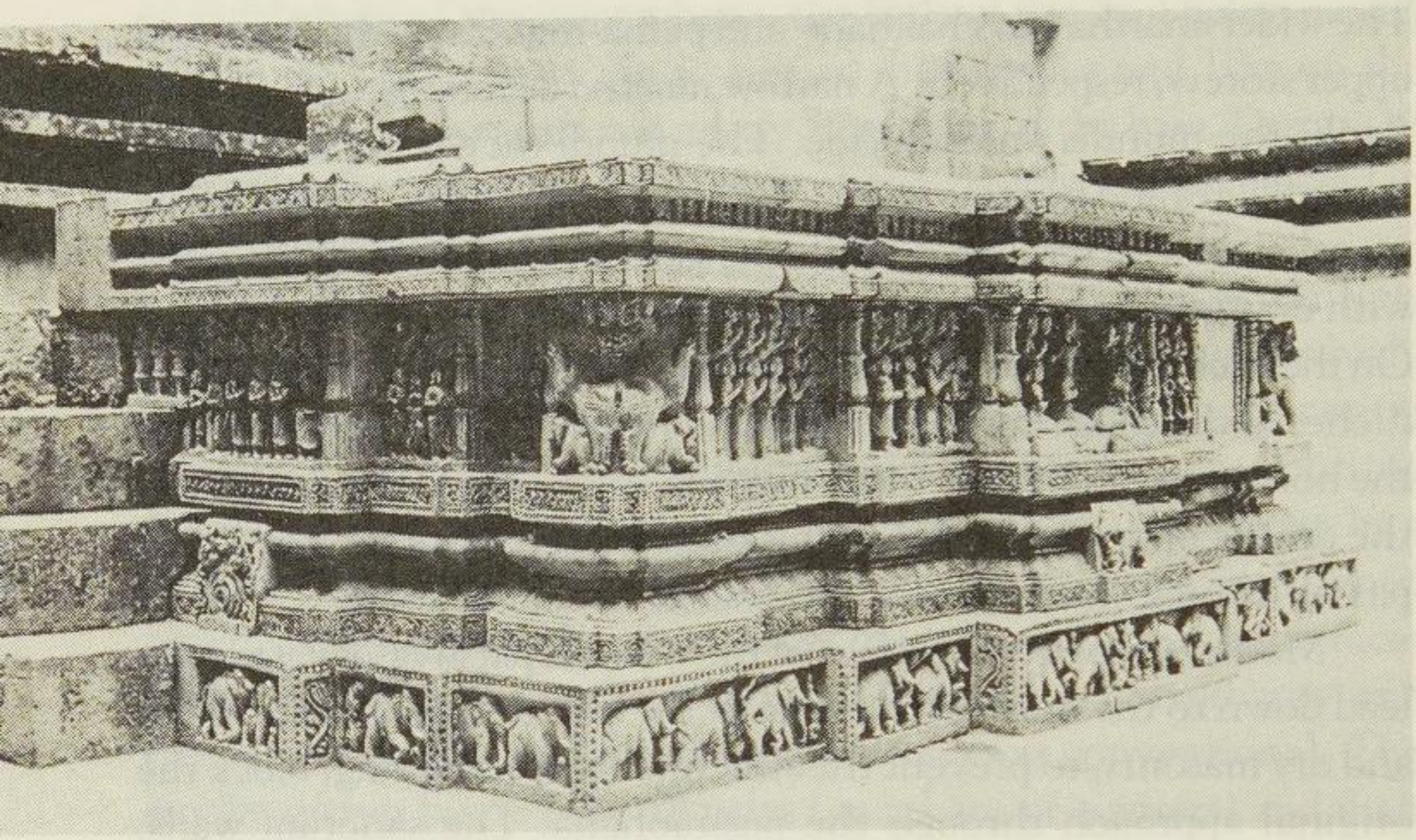


Photo 8. Surya Deul: southeast view of the platform in sanctum for the missing puja image

from the *pujari* (puja-priest) after the *pratistha* ceremony. The left compartment contains the kneeling queen amidst six of her attendants. The compartment further on the left and those on the north side are filled with rows of female followers of the queen. The male retinue of the king fills the right side compartments and those to the south. The crowning baranda consists of three richly decorated mouldings. The lotus petals on the sloping upper surface of the top moulding of the central projection are effaced, as noted by D. Mitra, probably due to the touch of devotees. Round depressions on top of the platform near the eastern edge were probably 'caused by the friction of pots for considerable periods of time'. A chlorite pedestal at the top of the platform was found empty when the debris was cleared from the sanctum. According to the *Madala Panji* the image was removed to the precincts of the Jagannatha temple sometime prior to 1628. If the present pedestal supported the original image, the latter must have been quite small in contrast to the colossal size of the sanctum, suggesting that possibly the image was originally the presiding deity of the adjacent Mahagayatri temple as indicated earlier.

Gandi (Spire) Decoration

The original height of the *gandi* is estimated to have been about 68.5m. In respect to the the decorative programme, the palm-leaf illustrations from the manuscript of *The Architecture of the Padmakesara Temple*, pertaining to the survey made during the fourth anka of Purushottamadeva of the Khurda dynasty in *c*. CE 1610, are rather slipshod in detail. The architectural proportions have little concern for accuracy which suggests that the drawings were not based on a first-hand view of the temple. In the largest illustration there are diminutive *vajra-mastaka* motifs on the lower mouldings of each of the ten *bhumi* divisions of the kanika whereas on the Lingaraja there is only one and it appears on the flat plane of the first bhumi. The anartha is decorated with superimposed *anga-shikharas* (miniature rekha shrines) as was probably the case, but the raha is far too wide in proportion to the other pagas just as the kanika is too thin. The same is true of another palm-leaf illustration found at Gagapur, depicting a frontal view, with a colophon stating that the drawing is an exact copy of the Surya Deul made in 1889. In this work the kanika is again extremely narrow and divided into 25 bhumi divisions, obviously a flight of fantasy on the part of the artist as by this late date the spire had completely collapsed.

The most reliable source for reconstructing the spire, aside from the decorative programmes of contemporary temples, should be the engraving made after the drawing prepared by Fergusson on his visit in 1837. This is one of the few surviving drawings actually based on observations of the monument itself. The drawing appears to be accurate in regards to the jagamohana, aside from showing 12 rather than ten mouldings in the baranda. The small intact portion of the spire appears more like an afterthought, however, and probably was not included on the original drawing but was added from memory on the engraving that was produced in 1848. Only a thin segment of the southwest corner of the spire was intact and the height was estimated to be 42.7m to 45.7m. In the drawing, however, the thin fragment is distorted in regards to perspective and appears to be a conjectural section of the east face. Although the details are sketchy, it is obvious that the kanika was disposed on two planes with the

rounded corner projecting. The number of bhumi divisions, however, is unclear as there are at least eleven depicted in the drawing though only two-thirds of the spire is represented. It is possible that the bhumis were subdivided as on the Jagannatha, so that ten bhumi divisions from a distance would appear to be twenty. The most confused part of the engraving is the row of miniature shrines superimposed vertically up the height of the extended flat area of the kanika, approximately one to a bhumi. These miniature shrines on the engraving appear to be anga-shikharas (turrets), which are standard decorative motifs for the anartha though generally limited to three or four. This extended flat area of the kanika replaces the anuraha recesses standard on earlier temples that were conventionally filled with superimposed vajra-mundis, one to each bhumi. Fergusson appears to have confused the motifs of the kanika and anartha and fused them in the engraving as a single design, thereby eliminating the anartha. Tentatively, based on Fergusson's engraving and contemporary architectural conventions, the decorative programme for the Surya Deul consisted of a pancha-ratha design with the kanika disposed on two planes and divided into ten bhumis. A row of superimposed vajra-mundis may have been aligned vertically up the flat portion of the kanika, one shrine for each bhumi. The anartha was decorated with four superimposed anga-shikharas.

The major decoration of the raha (central vertical projection) would have been the vajra-mastaka design with the huge projecting gaja-simha immediately above, the lion motif on the eastern façade being larger and elevated higher up in the conventional manner. The lion on the southern façade was apparently piled on top of a mass of dismantled stones when R. L. Mitra visited the site in 1868. He was unable to get anyone to scale the ruins, approximately 30.5m above ground level, so that he was only able to guess its height to be about 4.3m and its weight to be about six tons. The *mastaka* or crowning element was of conventional design. According to the *Baya Chakada*, copper bands were employed to fasten together the two halves of the *ugrapatta*, a pyramidal pedestal embracing the foot of the kalasha to consolidate it on top of the *amalaka* and *khapuri*. These belts are called *chumbaka loha*, which also means magnet or lodestone, so that this appellation probably gave rise to the legend of the lodestone on top of the temple that attracted ships to shore. The kalasha, however, was

made of stone, formed in two parts, and hollow, with the interior possibly being filled with jewels and precious stones as prescribed in the text, the *Shilpasarini*, while the lotus-finial was made of metal and studded with rubies. According to the *Madala Panji* it was the Dalabehera of Kila Bayalisbat, informed of the approach of the invading Kalapahada, who removed the ruby-studded lotus-finial and later deposited it in the Jagannatha temple to keep it from falling into the hands of the Hindu renegade. This story is generally discounted. Since the kalasha and lotus-finial apparently were still in place during the survey undertaken in CE 1610 by Purushottamadeva, the kalasha must have been removed shortly after this date.

Jagamohana

The bada of the jagamohana is approximately 28.7m square, measuring 18.3m square on the interior, while its crowning amalaka, minus the surmounting kalasha, rises to a height of 39m from ground level. Despite its colossal size, the bada is pancha-ratha in plan suggesting

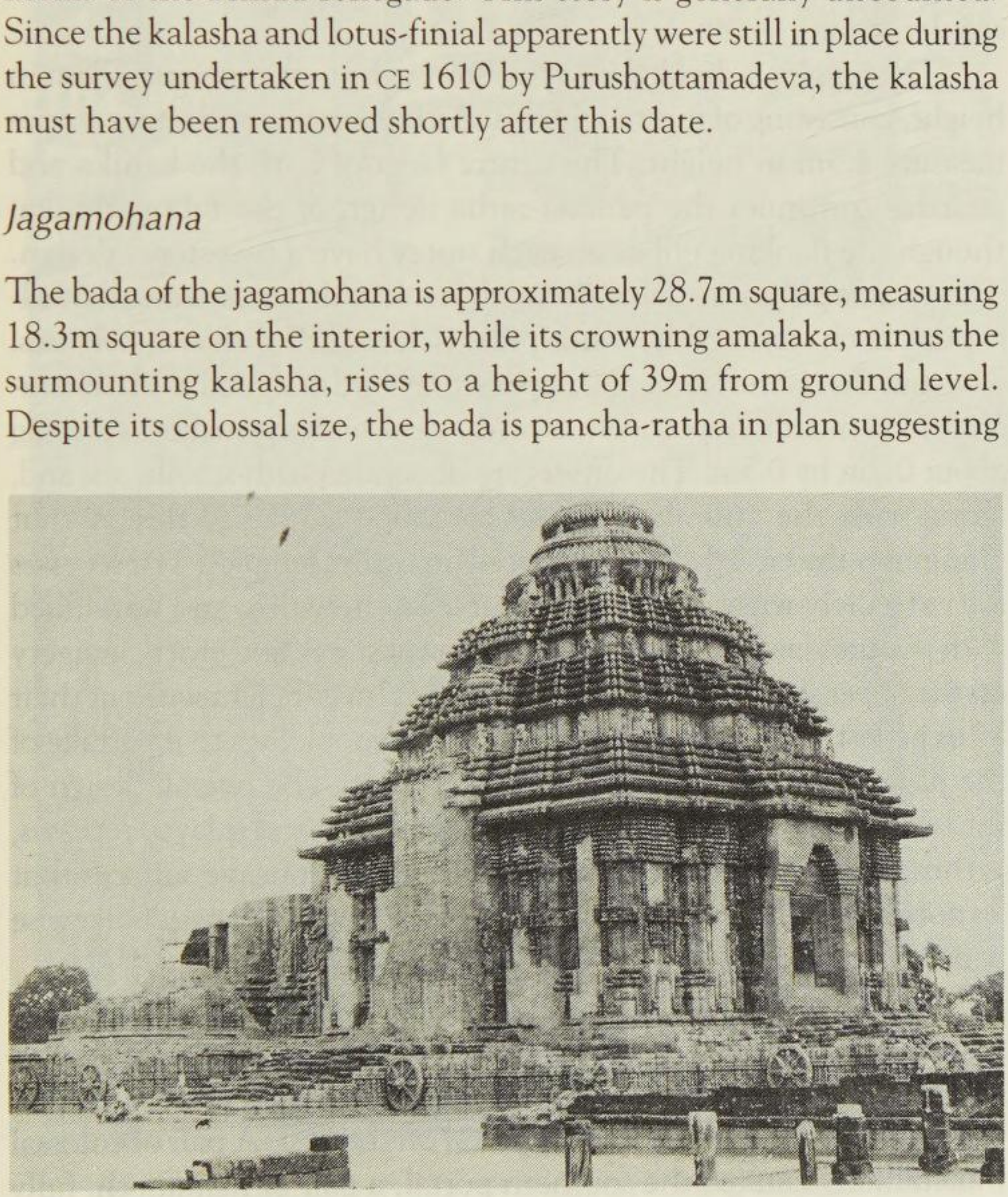


Photo 9. Surya Deul: southeast view of the *jagamohana* and the *deul*

a conservative approach in lieu of the evolving sapta-ratha and nava-ratha plans utilized on earlier temples, including the Mahagayatri. The paga designs and anuraha recesses are more elaborate, however, and avoid the crowded effect exhibited on earlier temples. The pabhaga, 2.7m in height, consists of five mouldings. The centre facet of the kanika and the anartha, overlaying the horizontal mouldings, is designed as a tala-garbhika consisting of an elongated khakhara-mundi flanked by a pillar on each side. The mundi niches house various secular scenes.

The jangha is divided into two storeys by a stringcourse, 0.8m in height, consisting of five mouldings. Both the lower and upper stories measure 2.5m in height. The centre facet of both the kanika and anartha continues the pancha-ratha design of the tala-garbhika, though the flanking pillars on each storey have a two-storey design. The outside pillars are decorated with scrollwork beneath an atlantid-capital. Each storey of the inside pillar is decorated with erotic figures. The mundis on the lower and upper storeys are designed as khakhara- and pidha-mundis respectively, as on the deul, with the niches averaging about 0.7m by 0.5m. The offsets are decorated with scrollwork and, along with the anuraha recesses, produce a splayed design that eliminates the crowded effect noticed on earlier temples. The recesses are extremely wide, averaging about 0.7m in width, and were filled with the standard virala motifs on the lower storey and erotic imagery on the upper storey, the images averaging 2.2m in height without their lotus pedestal. The baranda consists of ten mouldings that partake of the paga divisions with their multiple offsets. The overall design of the bada, with partially rounded, projecting pagas and splayed recesses, is thus one of gradual undulating convex and concave surfaces that do not obscure the pancha-ratha plan even though each paga is likewise pancha-ratha in design.

The decoration of the north and south gavaksha projections, now mostly dismantled and replaced by modern masonry, consisted of entrance portals fronted by monumental stairways. They duplicate the design of the major entrance portal on the east. A pair of colossal war stallions flanked the southern portal, a pair of mammoth, fully harnessed elephants flanked the northern portal, and a pair of monumental gaja-kranta motifs flanked the eastern portal. All three

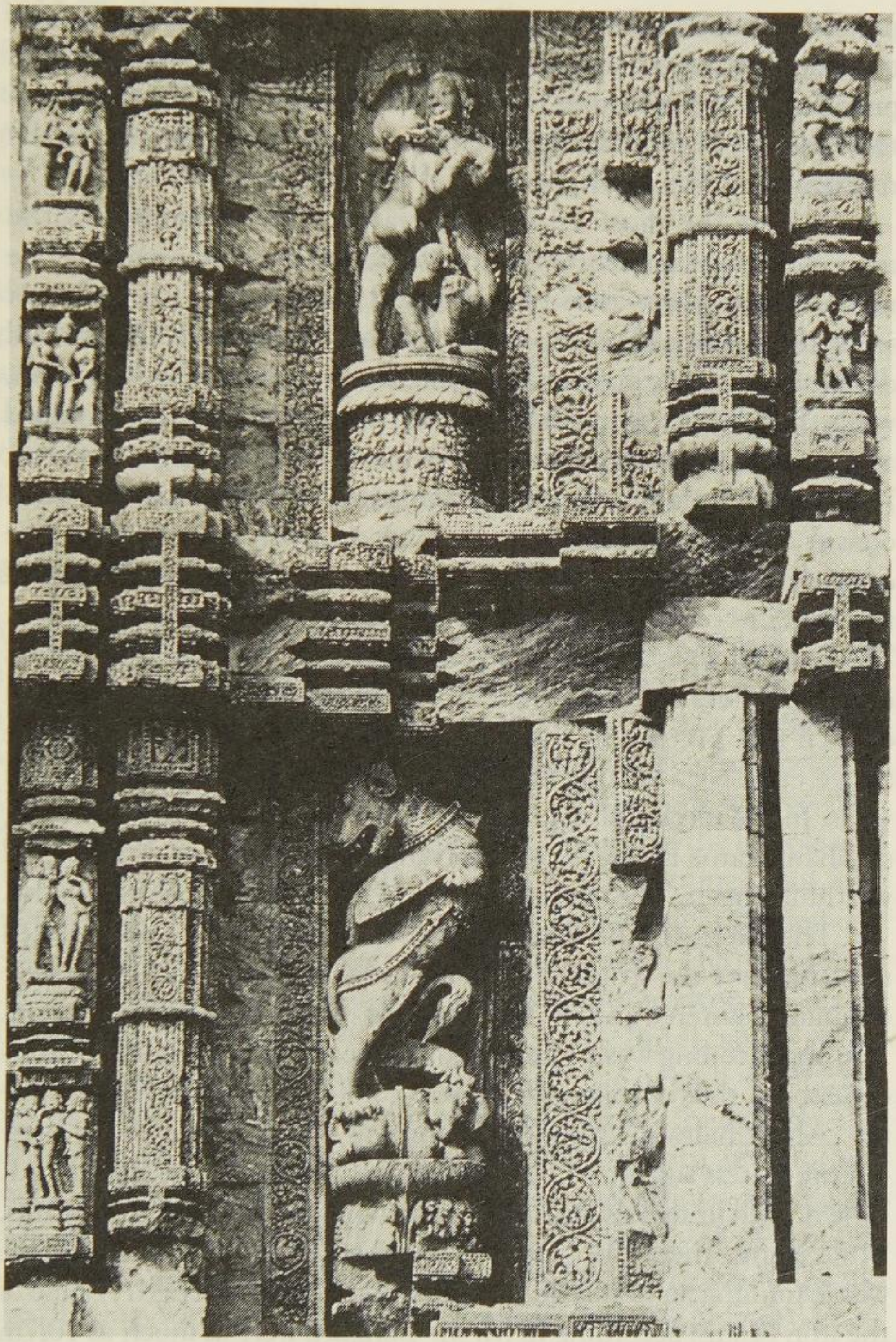


Photo 10. Surya Deul: splayed *anuraha* recess of the *jagamohana* filled with a *maithuna* on the upper storey and a *virala* on the lower storey

portals were spanned by a torana with a multifoil arch springing from two impressive pilasters, those on the east appearing in the drawings prepared by A. Sterling in 1825 and Fergusson in 1837 but nowhere to be seen by R. L. Mitra in 1868. Their capitals were level with the navagraha architrave that projected forward above the lintel.

One of the most impressive features of the temple is the magnificent pyramidal roof that has elicited great admiration. The roof contains three tiers of horizontal mouldings with each tier separated from the other by a deeply recessed vertical wall. The overall design is singularly appropriate and elegant, as stated by Fergusson, while the 'play of light and shade from its bold and varied projections and intervening shadows give it a brilliant and sparkling effect that, I confess, I have almost never seen equalled'. The first two tiers each consist of six mouldings of diminishing size with their vertical face ornately relieved with military and animal processions. The third tier contains only five mouldings that are devoid of ornamentation. The mouldings partake of the paga divisions with the projecting portals on all four sides being crowned by a small mastaka on the upper half of each tier. Sixteen free-standing, life-size female musicians, one above each paga occupy the terrace fronting the recessed vertical walls. In the terrace of the first tier above each portal there is a pair of Ghantakarna Bhairavas representing complementary peaceful and wrathful aspects. The mastaka crowning the roof is minus its kalasha.

The interior of the jagamohana is now inaccessible, being sealed up to preserve the structure from further subsidence. The walls were originally plastered and whitewashed but mostly bereft of decoration. The upper ceiling was corbelled out by means of over-sailing courses of masonry, thus enabling the sides to converge gradually towards the top. About halfway up a false ceiling was added, consisting of huge laterite lintels supported by four massive pillars. As described by P. Brown, each lintel was reinforced 'by a number of wrought iron beams, while many others, like girders, were disposed about the ceiling, the whole forming an iron grid, or framework, of great strength'. Some of the iron beams, according to M. M. Ganguly, were as much as 10.7m in length and over 0.2m thick with one fragment measuring 0.3m in section. The massive pillars, which divide the floor into a nave and two aisles, were still standing when Fergusson visited the site in CE

1837. The lower ceiling had already collapsed and was piled up on the floor when Baba Brahmachari carted away images from the ruins in the mid-eighteenth century. When R. L. Mitra visited the site, the pillars were lying fragmented on the pile of rubble on the floor along with numerous iron beams, the pillars most likely falling during the decimating gale of 1848.

The juncture connecting the deul with the jagamohana is decorated with a multi-faceted pilaster and an anuraha-recess. The pilaster, aligned with the jagamohana, has a pabhaga and a double-storey shaft. The anuraha recess is aligned with divisions of the deul. The lower storey is filled with a *jagrata* (leonine figure leaping on an elephant) while the upper storey contains an erotic image. The lateral flanks of the gavaksha and entrance portals are similarly decorated.

Entrance Portals

With the gavaksha projections being designed as portals there are thus four main entrance portals plus the smaller portals of the nisha shrines fronting the raha niches of the deul. A pair of pilasters supporting a large multi-foil arch framed the three exterior portals of the jagamohana. Only fragments of these toranas now survive. The doorframe is one of the most conspicuous features of the temple and its decoration serves not only to beautify the entrance, but also functions as a magical barrier. Its decorative programme is thus imbued with complementary dual Agni-Soma characteristics. The programme consists of doorguards at the base, ornamental scrollwork on the jambs, *dvara-lalata-bimba* panels at the centre of the lintel, and a graha (planets) slab on the architrave. Although the overall decorative programme corresponds generally with *Shilpa-shastra* injunctions, the interpretation, with flat jambs aligned nearly flush with one another, small-scale doorguards confined to niches, and refined scrollwork that dominates figure motifs, is uniquely Orissan. One of the first western scholars to appreciate the beauty of the doorframes at Konark was Stirling, who had a drawing of the eastern portal prepared in CE 1825:

> The skill and labour of the best artists seem to have been reserved for the finely polished slabs of chlorite, which line and decorate the outer faces of

the doorways. The whole of the sculpture . . . is executed with a degree of taste, propriety and freedom, which would stand a comparison with some of our best specimens of Gothic architectural ornament. The workmanship remains, too, as perfect as if it had just come from under the chisel of the sculptor, owing to the extreme hardness and durability of the stone.

The pilasters and part of the arch of this eastern portal are also visible on the drawing prepared by Fergusson in 1837. The projecting flanks of the entrances were decorated with superimposed figure sculptures constituting an upper and lower storey while the arch at the top framed a centre niche housing an image of Surya. The flanking spandrels were decorated with small pilasters forming shallow niches and a jagrata at the corners.

The architrave beneath this upper niche was decorated with a chlorite navagraha slab that rested on an iron beam. The graha slab from the eastern portal is 6.1m in length and 1.1m high. The grahas, housed in pidha-mundis, average 0.7m in height and 0.5m to 0.53m in width. Beginning on the dexter the grahas are: (1) the sun; (2) the moon; (3) Mars; (4) Mercury; (5) Jupiter; (6) Venus; (7) Saturn; (8) Rahu (ascending node); and (9) Ketu (descending node). Except for Rahu, who is represented in bust form, and Ketu, who is serpentine from the waist down, each graha is seated with legs crossed and locked. Except for Rahu, who has a *jata-mandala* coiffure of radiating, serpentine curls, each graha wears a kirita-mukuta. Surya (sun) holds a full-blown lotus in each hand, Rahu holds a crescent-moon in each hand, and Ketu holds a sword and a pot of fire. The other grahas each hold a rosary and a vessel. Brihaspati (Jupiter) can additionally be recognized by his beard and potbelly. The placement of the grahas as a *mangala* or auspicious motif above the entrance is in keeping with the propitious-apotropaic symbolism dominating the decorative programme. The planets at different times and in different conjunctions supposedly control and influence the lives of human beings, and rituals are still practiced by the populace anxious to appease some particular star, or graha, which may temporarily be adversely ruling their fates. According to the *Shilpa-shastra* all works should begin with an invocation to the grahas, otherwise human beings cannot attain their wishes.

Similar graha images on the other major portals were carved from individual stones rather than from a single slab. A complete set is

placed on the entrance gate to the Gundica compound at Puri. They possibly derive from the architrave over the southern portal which, according to a report in the *Madala Panji*, was removed to Puri by Baba Brahmachari. There are also ten graha images deposited in the British Museum, including two images of Surya. A fourth image of Ketu is presently worshipped inside a thatched house on the sea at Chandrabhaga-tirtha, while another graha is in the Indian Museum at Kolkata.

The doorframe on the eastern portal contains seven bands of decorative motifs along with a framing border relieved with *padma-prishtha* (juxtaposed lotus leaves). The bands rise from the top of vajra-mundis housing a row of figures at the base of the jambs. Included among these figures are kanyas, serpents, male figures and *kinnaras* (half-bird and half-human hybrids) in addition to a doorguard. The centre panels on the lintel, beginning with the lowest band, contain a Gaja-Lakshmi (Lakshmi bathed by elephants) and, in the next five panels, duplicate scenes of a seated Raja (or *rajaguru*) flanked by a chauri-bearing attendant and a minister. On the top panel the Raja is seated in meditation within a *makara-torana*. A second lintel, belonging to the southern portal, is similar though only the lowest four bands have survived. The slab is now situated beneath a tree a few yards northeast of the jagamohana.

The doorguards, almost unnoticed because of their small size, are 0.3m high. They stand with one leg slightly uplifted and one arm crossed in front of their body where it rests on an upright mace. The other hand displays *abhaya*. This pose is duplicated by the guards on the nisha doorframes and by those on the platform added in front of the Mahagayatri temple. The terrifying guard is stout and has a thin beard, open mouth, mustache, and dishevelled hair. The benign guard has a smiling face and wears his hair neatly arranged in a jata-mandala. Both wrathful and peaceful aspects function to defend the doorway and both guards are propitiated before entering the sanctuary. On the smaller khondalite doorframes of the nisha shrines there are only three bands of decorative scrollwork plus a projecting pilaster. The guards are 0.4m high, however, and thus are larger than those on the major portals though they do not exhibit the contrasting benign and terrifying aspects.

Dual aspects are also exhibited on the Ghantakarna Bhairavas placed in the lower terrace of the pyramidal roof over the entrance portals. Each has four heads and six arms. They hold a disc, *khatvanga* (staff with a skull), drinking bowl, drum, banner, skull-cup, and trident in various combinations. They dance on a pedestal shaped like a boat, as prescribed in the *Saudhikagama*, where they are referred to as 'guardian of the temple'. For protection of the temple, puja has to be offered to them on the dark fifth of the month of Bhadra. They are propitiated to protect the temple from *bhutas* (imps), *pretas* (ghosts), fire and lightning, and to destroy and drive away all calamities. The images on the west, facing the deul, have not survived.

Cult Images

With the development of a double-storey nisha shrine fronting each parshva-devata and the addition of a makara-torana framing an upper niche above the three entrance portals of the jagamohana, the number of images representing secondary aspects of the presiding deity is greatly increased. The images of the lower storey of the nisha shrines, according to A. Boner, were Kshetrapala (south), Hara-Surya (west), and Dharmamurti (north). The major parshva-devatas, housed within reconstructed niches, are Mitra (south), Pushan (west), and Haridashva (north). Each deity is placed in front of a torana carved on the back-slab with small images of Brahma and Shiva at the lower corners of the spandrels. The upper border of the torana supports small images of dancers and musicians. In front of khakhara-mundis at the base of the back-slab are images of Masa (month) or Divasa (day) and Samvatsara (year), both registering time and watching over the irreversible ordered course of the days, the seasons, and the years. A pair of consorts—Rajani and Nikshubha and Chhaya and Suverchasa—stands above each mundi. Small images of Narasimha I and his guru kneel before Surya. Behind are images of Dandi (Skanda) and Pingala (Agni). Both Pushan and Mitra stand in a chariot holding a long-stemmed lotus in each hand. They are richly ornamented and wear an ornate girdle, a short dhoti, and long boots. Whereas Pushan wears a tall kirita-mukuta, Mitra's coiffure is arranged as a stupa-shaped bun on the crown of the head. The legless Aruna is at their feet holding the reigns of the seven horses. Usha and Pratyusha (goddesses of dawn),

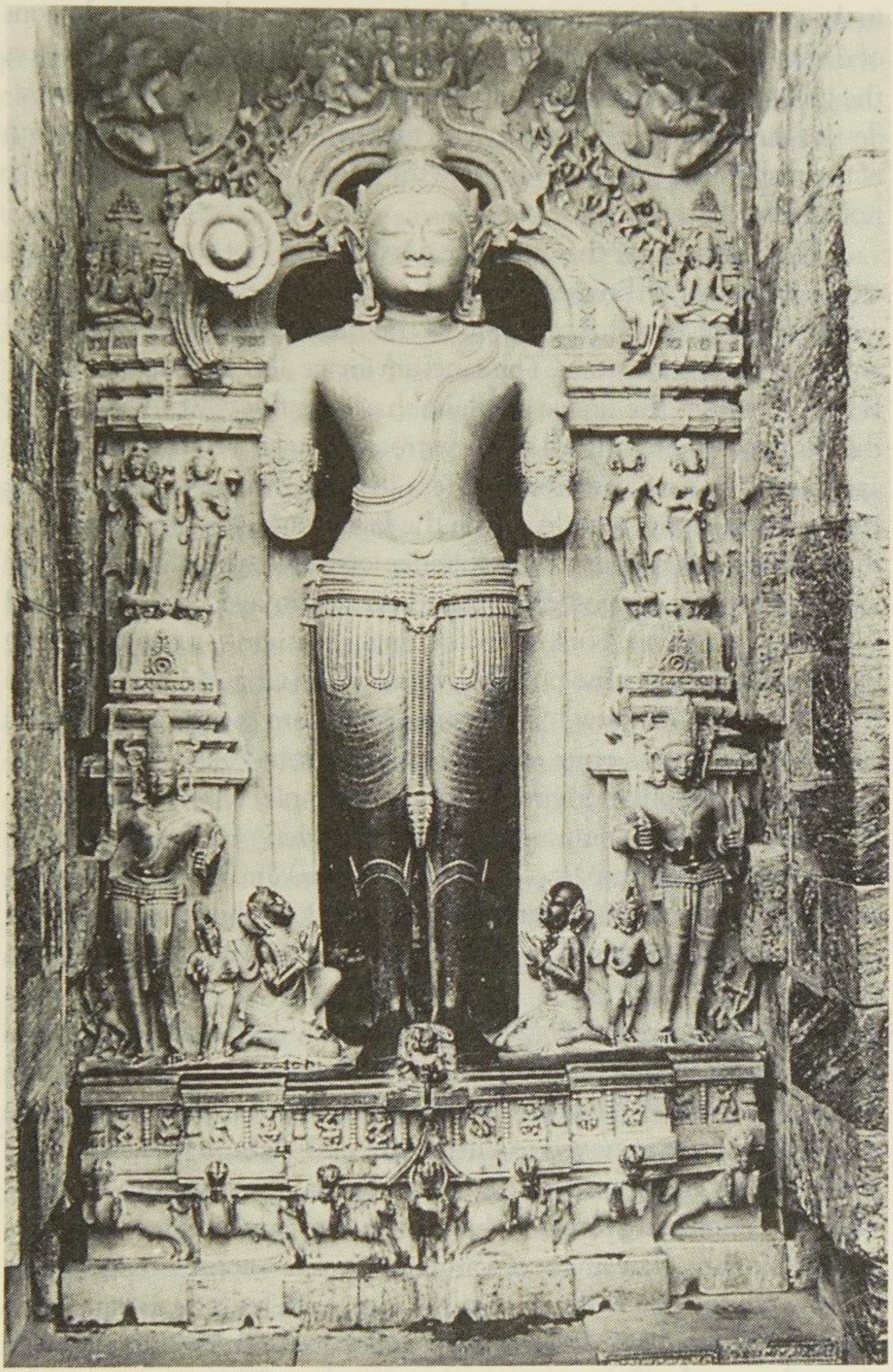


Photo 11. Surya Deul: Surya (Mitra) in the south *raha* niche (3.4m x 1.8m)

in the extreme lower corners, are shooting arrows to chase away demons of darkness. Haridashva (Bhaskara), in the north niche, is riding on the golden horse as on the Mahagayatri temple. Each of the parshva-devata images is over 3.4m tall. The niches within the lower sanctum of the nisha shrines are empty while the images of the upper raha have not survived.

The images over the entrance portals have not survived though we know from Stirling's drawing that the image on the east was a seated form of Surya. According to the *Baya Chakada* it was a four-armed Biranchi-Narayana. The sanctum image also was a seated Surya. Boner identifies the image as Mahabhaskara, the central essence of the Sun god embracing all of his various aspects. Though the image apparently has not survived, unless it is the image housed in the Biranchi-Narayana temple within the Jagannatha compound at Puri, there is a palm-leaf illustration that depicts a two-armed Surya seated in a chariot that supposedly is based on this image. There is mixed confusion, however, both as to the image's origin—some believing that it was originally the presiding deity of the adjacent Mahagayatri temple—and as to how long it remained there *in situ*, as indicated earlier, with reports of its removal varying from 1628 to 1759.

The Aruna pillar originally from this temple, now in front of the Jagannatha temple compound at Puri, is carved of chlorite and is of exquisite workmanship. It is approximately 10.3m high including its pedestal, which is 2.4m square. The sixteen-sided shaft has a diameter of 0.6m. Aruna is seated at the top on the pericarp of a full-blown lotus.

The dikpalas and their patnis (female counterparts) were housed in their respective niches on the lower and upper kanikas of both the deul and the jagamohana. Only five have survived while a sixth image (Vayu-patni) was removed to Puri in the mid-eighteenth century. Of the surviving images, two—Agni and Yama—belonged to the deul while the remaining three—Ishana, Varunani and Nirriti—are from the jagamohana. The image of Varunani measures approximately 0.7m by 0.4m while Agni is about 0.8m by 0.5m, each helping to determine the average size of the niches of the jagamohana and deul. The dikpalas are each seated in lalitasana on their mounts. They are two-armed except for Ishana who has four arms.

Due to pillage and the ruined state of the temple, the iconographic programme of the anartha niches cannot be determined with certainty. From scattered chlorite images housed in various museums, it is probable that it was similar to the iconographic programme of the Lingaraja. The niches of the lower storey housed primarily secular themes while the upper storey niches were filled with various cult images. Images that likely filled the lower storey niches include two examples of King Narasimha in discourse (National Museum, Konark Museum); an image of Narasimha worshipping a trinity (National Museum); Narasimha seated on a swing (National Museum); a *shikshadana* motif and a scene of royal personages riding an elephant (Siddha-Mahavira temple at Puri). These would have filled seven of the eight niches. Images from the lower storey on the jagamohana include two shikshadana motifs (Indian Museum, Konark Museum); two images of king Narasimha worshipping a trinity (Konark Museum, Jagannatha temple); and possibly the shikshadana motif in the Victoria & Albert Museum (London).

Most of the images of the upper storey have vanished, possibly destroyed when the spire collapsed, or, being cult images, plundered and set up elsewhere for local worship. Images corresponding to the upper storey niche measurements of the deul include a Hara-Surya (Konark Museum) and a five-headed Ganapati with his Shakti (Siddha-Mahavira temple at Puri). Also belonging to the temple is an image depicting the marriage of king Narasimha with Sitadevi. In its damaged condition it is 0.9m by 0.6m. It possibly was placed in a niche on the juncture as marriage scenes frequently appear here. There are also four chlorite cult images in the British Museum that may belong to the Surya Deul, including a Nataraja, a second five-headed Shakti-Ganapati, a Mahisamardini, and a Surya. Although Boner assigns these images to the lower storey of the deul, they measure from 1–1.1m in height and thus are too large for the anartha niches.

Erotic Imagery

The sculptural decoration of the temple contains a plethora of explicit erotic imagery. Although erotic imagery including tantric rituals appears on most Orissan temples throughout the tenth century, explicit

Photo 12. Puri: Siddha-Mahavira temple; *shikshadana* motif from the lower *anartha* niche of the *deul* of the Surya Deul at Konark. The visible portion measures 0.7m by 0.5m

sexual imagery was seldom as pervasive in the decorative programme as it is at Konark. There are, in fact, more maithuna themes on the Surya Deul than on any other temple in India. Sarala Dasa, in his fifteenth century (Oriya) *Mahabharata*, relates that at Konark

everything, including the *Bhaskara-purana*, has been made obscene and that on the temple walls all of the obscene episodes from the eighteen Puranas have been told (carved) before the Sun god. This plenitude of erotic imagery was especially scandalous to nineteenth-century Europeans, beginning with Stirling. G. F. Cockburn, a Commissioner of Orissa, even rejoiced at the dilapidation of the temple and officially wrote in CE 1858: 'The beastly representations with which it is covered makes it, I think, very desirable that the whole of the remaining building should be levelled with the ground.' He additionally states that 'there is no reason whatever why a single rupee should be expended in keeping up the present detestable remaining part of the old temple.' Among later admirers, the radio commentator Lowell Thomas remarked that it was 'the most beautiful' and at the same time 'the most obscene building in the world'.

Although there is no single explanation for this plethora of erotic imagery, various theories have been proposed. Benjamin Rowland suggested that 'the function of these endlessly repeated pairs in dalliance must have had something to do with actual orgiastic rites conducted in association with a special cult of the sun as a universal fructifying force.' P. Brown even suggests, as mentioned, that it is not improbable that this temple was erected on such a remote site 'in order that the practices so wantonly illustrated might be ceremoniously conducted by its addicts in an underworld of their own. The ultimate result was the same as that which has overtaken other races who have abandoned themselves to such unnatural pursuits,' that is, the disappearance or degeneracy of whole segments of society. A related moralistic view suggests that this plethora of erotic imagery was symptomatic of a distraught society, the decadent expression of a neurotic environment. Ananda Coomaraswamy, however, pointed out that the obscene figures on the exterior walls symbolize the illusory world of pleasure in contrast to the solemn character of the inner side of the sanctuary. Their purpose, thus, was to awaken a feeling of aversion for the earthly life for which they stand and lead the devotees to the calm atmosphere of the abode of god. K. C. Panigrahi, in a similar vein, remarked that the 'obscene figures in the Orissan temples were in all probability meant to test the self-restraint of a visitor before he was entitled to reap the merits of his visit to the god'. Sex, however,

played an important role in everyday life and in religious pursuits, being one of the four major aims in life. That the temple was not intended exclusively for ascetic practices, that Deliverance could also be sought through Enjoyment, is recorded in the *Brahma Purana*, where it is mentioned that Konark was a place conferring *Kama* (enjoyment) and *Paragati* (liberation) on the worshipper. The sumptuousness of a temple complex is often described in orthodox texts, as in the *Shiva Purana* (7.2.25.35–38) where it is stated that: 'the temple of Shiva shall be made like a royal palace. . . . It shall contain thousands of courtesans in dance and music and those adept in playing on flutes and lutes.'

The auspicious nature of loving couples (mithunas) is quite ancient in India and in many texts it is enjoined that they must be sculpted on the temple, particularly on the doorframe. Included among the texts are the *Brihat-samhita* (56.15), the *Agni Purana* (104.29–30), and the *Hayashirshapancharatra*. In the *Samaranganasutradhara* (39.33), it is recommended that men and women engaged in *rati-krida* (love play) under the branches of trees should be carved on the body of temples. In the *Shilpa Prakasha* (II.502–04) it is stated that a place without love images is known as a place to be shunned:

> In the opinion of the Kaulacaras it is always a base, forsaken place, resembling a dark abyss, which is shunned like the den of Death. Without offering puja to the Kamakala yantra, the Shakti puja and the sadhana become as useless as the bath of an elephant.

There is nothing in the canonical texts dealing with the Sun god's mythology and symbolism, in the texts of the Dharma cult, or in manuals on temple ritual, that justifies the preponderance of erotic imagery on Surya temples. The multitude of erotic images on the Surya Deul is thus not necessarily related to a specific cult of Sun worship. Erotic imagery is not limited to Konark. It evolves from motifs appearing on earlier Orissan temples that are primarily Shaivite and continues on later temples of all denominations and often dominates the decorative programme.

The belief that sexual motifs were endowed with magical power for prosperity, well-being and auspiciousness, for appeasement of evil spirits and calamities is also ancient. This belief was incorporated into

the decorative programme of the temple from the beginning, though its increased prominence and proliferation at this time is possibly due to the evolving popularity of Tantrism. The tantric concept of maithuna as makara, as D. Desai points out, rests on the magical use of sex for the propitiation of deities and for achieving *siddhi*. By this time, some of the Puranas recognized the *Tantras* as one of the religious authorities and various schools of Smarta-Puranic religions incorporated tantric elements into their rituals and practices while tantric gurus spread their doctrine among the aristocracy. Included among the tantric or other heterodox religious movements that were current in Orissa at this time were the Kaulacharas and the Vaishnava Sahajiyas. Their esoteric *sadhana* required the initiation of a guru and it could be transmitted only in utter secrecy within the circle of adepts. The *shakti*, who was a necessary adjunct in this form of yoga, appears to have been a living female companion, ritually initiated and converted into a vessel of the divine energy, rather than a purely spiritual conception. The experience of achieving supreme bliss through union with her is depicted in erotic imagery intentionally borrowed from ordinary earthly experiences rather than sublimated, spiritual imagery—hence the enigmatic nature of the imagery when an attempt is made to correlate it with rituals published in orthodox tantric texts.

In the tenth century, explicit scenes representing sequential stages of tantric sadhana appear on Shakta, Shaiva and Vaishnava temples throughout Orissa. By the end of the century, with the emergence of new sects such as the Kaulacharas, the various sequential stages of erotic rituals are elevated to major, but independent, motifs. By eliminating the sequential arrangement of such prescribed stages they can no longer be singled out as ritual practices. As independent motifs the ritualistic tenor becomes transformed into one of animated joy and conviviality. The proliferation of sexual images as major motifs not only testifies to their widespread acceptance as temple decoration but also to their glorification as hedonistic motifs that give delight to the people. They are even utilized by the Kaulacharas to obscure the magic and power of their *yantras*, as indicated in the *Shilpa Prakasha* (II.538–39) in describing the *Kamakalamaha-yantra*: 'this *yantra* is utterly secret, it should not be shown to everyone. For this reason a love-scene has to be carved on the lines of the *yantra*.'

The actual number of expicit sexual scenes at Konark, as noted by Behera, is actually small in contrast to the profusion of other imagery and it must be viewed in the same manner—as part of the overall decorative programme and not isolated as a distinct phenomenon. As auspicious motifs they likewise beautify and protect the temple. It is frequently the magical power of sex that dominates in these images or in the underlying secret yantras, both of which are stressed in the *Shilpa Prakasha*. In respect to the symbolic representation of sex in the form of the *Kamakalamaha*-yantra, it further states (II.536–37):

This most secret *yantra* is best for giving protection to all (to the place). It is the evident giver of power and the manifest bestower of all perfections (*siddhis*). In the best temples dedicated to the Shakti and to Rudra this *yantra* must certainly be placed. Then the monument will stand unmoved forever.

Although there are numerous sexo-yogic poses among the maithuna motifs, it is the female, as pointed out by Desai, and not the *sadhaka* who performs gymnastic feats while engaged in various sexual acts. This may suggest that these scenes represent skilled women presented to kings for the magico-medical purpose of *kayasadhana* and to provide novel stimulations, the belief being that man absorbs virtue and youth from woman. This averting of age in man by commerce with young women also appears in literature. It is equally plausible that many of the scenes are variations of *Kamashastra bandhas*.

In the *Kamasutra* and other sex manuals are included various amusing postures, hedonistic in nature, which are based on regional sex habits of women and the postures preferred by them, thus recognizing that success in coitus depends upon a man's ability to please woman. Testimony that the gods were equally interested in a variety of poses for the sake of novelty as well as the satisfaction of their female partner is evident in later Puranas. In the *rasa* sphere in the *Brahma-Vaivarta Purana* for example, Krishna performed sixteen kinds of sexual intercourse with the gopis, four of which were performed in an inverse order. Not to be outdone and likewise well-versed in sexual science was the *asura* Shankhachuda who, by the conjunction of the different members of the body, experienced sixty-four kinds of pleasure with his consort Tulasi. Even in the *yatra* of the Yadavas described in the *Harivamsha*, we can see this playfulness with Krishna

and his wives in aquatic sports. At Konark the variety of activity and variation of pose are limited only by the imagination, while the number of partners may vary from one to five.

In respect to their placement on the Surya Deul, the most monumental motifs are those in the upper storey recesses. With the increased width of the splayed design, the maithunas are no longer obscured by shadows as in the narrow recesses of earlier temples such as the Rajarani. With the colossal scale of the Surya Deul they are for the first time treated in a heroic manner, conceived with the same grandeur and dignity as the parshva-devatas. Framed by the scrollwork of the splayed offsets, they appear in isolation and take on a cult-like solemnity. In some cases the enraptured partners seemingly approach the sublime as they affectionately embrace in anticipation of supreme bliss. Though suggesting action, the active female clinging to the static male or pinning him against the wall, they appear frozen in time, their ethereal embrace immutable yet passionate.

In contrast to the hieratic solemnity of the monumental images of the upper jangha, the erotic imagery of the platform walls appears earthly and transitory in nature, the activities of the participants running the whole gamut of sexual experience, real or imagined. The ephemeral nature of the activities is increased by their frieze-like appearance. Each scene is barely separated from one another by a narrow recess, an alignment that integrates individually conceived motifs into an orgiastic display interrupted at regular intervals by mundis, serpent pillars, or pilasters that serve as stage props for performances presented to a moving audience. Though dynamic in action, displaying an exuberant joy of life, the figures are occasionally crude in execution and expression. Except when outright humorous, they tend to dull even an appreciative eye through excessive repetition.

Secularization of the Iconographic Programme

By the eleventh century the image of woman becomes pervasive in the decorative programme of all temples, not just Shakta shrines. The *devadasi* institution of presenting dancing girls to the temple is inaugurated and the temple complex increasingly becomes a centre of social-cultural activities. In addition to the woman, the central

figures in the changing iconographic programme and in the socio-religious activities within the temple complex are the guru and the king. The guru is deified and daily worship is offered to him as to the deity. The importance of the guru is particularly stressed in Kaula texts, such as the *Kularnava Tantra*. It is stated that all learning, all austerities, family status, observances, and pilgrimages are useless and unnecessary, that there is no god higher than the guru, that the root of all liberation is the grace of the guru: 'Indeed, the Guru is the father, Guru is the mother, Guru is the god Maheshvara Himself. Even when God Shiva is wroth, the Guru is the savior; but when the Guru himself is angered, there is none to save.'

The deification of the guru, as an individual who possesses the knowledge and meaning of the mantras, opens the door to the deification of the king and the further secularization of the iconographic programme of the temple. Although the Bhanja kings (tenth century) were often eulogized as being like Kama (Cupid) in appearance and heroic skill, the opening verses of the copperplate grants of the Somavamshi rulers extol the pursuit of love and their domain is visualized as the pleasure garden of Kama. Whereas the earlier erotic friezes depicting tantric rituals appear to be an indigenous development, the pursuit of love extolled by the new rulers reflects the changing social and religious attitudes spreading throughout India. In earlier inscriptions the establishment and protection of virtuous behaviour is extolled, along with the military prowess of the king. Now, however, the king is considered a new god of love and his sexual prowess or exploits are described. As noticed in the later Puranas, gardens and cities are pictured as vying in beauty with celestial

Photo 13. Surya Deul: royal figure reading a copperplate grant in front of ministers, from the platform wall

examples, as in the descriptions of Yayatinagara, the early capital of the Somavamshi rulers in western Orissa. This pursuit and glorification of love continues in the Ganga period. In the commemorative inscription of the Ananta-Vasudeva temple for example, it is recorded: 'there is this province of Utkala, where the five friends of the god of five arrows—the eye and others—appear fulfilled of desire in (their several) series of objects.' It is then mentioned that the husband of Chandrika (the builder of the temple) had practised with her 'diverse kinds of pleasure in which delight was attendent upon amorous passions'.

Though not an end in itself, the pursuit of love played an important role in the daily life of the upper classes, the erotic activities of queens and princesses even being described in temple inscriptions. According to the *Shilpa Prakasha*, the shilpin was allowed to carve pleasure-giving images of the king, the princes, the ministers, and the priests, as well as the lover in the company of his beloved, according to his imagination as a frieze in life-like manner. With the development of a two-storey jangha, alasa-kanya and mithuna motifs become standard motifs on the upper storey, often replacing cult images, and the walls of this storey virtually become transformed into the abode of Kama. In some cases, in fact, Kama is the only male deity depicted on the upper storey, while the kanyas represent his handmaidens.

With the adoption of the name of 'Purushottama' in their inscriptions, initiated by his father Anangabhima III in CE 1230, rather than using their own names, the Ganga kings claimed to rule under divine order (*adesha*) and as son (*putra)* and vassal (*rauta*) of the Divine Lord of Puri, the sole state deity of Orissa. Just as the deity became more 'royalized' in concept, so the king became more 'divinized'. As the surrogate for the Supreme Lord, the king (Anangabhima) even had himself taking part in the twelve yatras (festivals) on the platform of the Jagannatha temple, though these images were quite small in the overall decorative programme. The activities of Narasimha I at Konark not only appear in small scale on the pabhaga and platform but were also housed in anartha niches previously reserved for cult deities, testimony that he again was outdoing his father. From inscriptions and literary sources we know that Narasimha I was praised

as a great warrior and hero, being compared with Rama and eulogized as an incarnation of both the lion and boar avatars of Vishnu. Testimony to his virtual deified status appears on the pedestal of the puja image, as mentioned, where he is receiving from his guru the 'garland of command' from the neck of the Sun god. This is repeated in one of the anartha images where he is paying homage to a trinity of a Shiva-linga, Purushottama (Jagannatha), and Durga, the three most powerful deities of Orissa. It was his father who first used the titles of all three, that is, 'Durgaputra', 'Shri Purushottamaputra', and 'Rudraputra', suggesting that he was a devout worshipper of all three deities. Narasimha I is again following established tradition.

Nata-mandira

The nata-mandira is 15.8m square and is built on a platform that is 23.8m square. The platform is 3.6m high. At the base is a plinth with three mouldings. The platform is pancha-ratha in plan with a stairway, approximately 4.2m wide, projecting from the centre on all four sides. The walls are ornately decorated except for a parapet framing the eastern stairway. The pabhaga consists of five mouldings on the corner pilasters or a series of mundis flanked by balusters on flat areas. The figures on the balusters are kanyas or female dancers and musicians. The mundi niches contain mostly female figures.

The wall portion of the platform is divided into two storeys by a stringcourse of three ornately carved mouldings. The multi-faceted pilasters have a vajra-mundi carved on the centre facet of each storey. The mundi niches are filled with various motifs, including dikpalas, dikpala-patnis, elephants, horses, *ganas*, shikshadana motifs, atlantid figures, and deities. The pillar images are mostly female musicians and dancers. A cornice of three decorated mouldings crowns the upper jangha. At regular intervals are projecting gargoyles fashioned as lions, or as squatting human figures displaying their sexual organs.

The overall decorative programme of the platform is more uniform than that supporting the main shrine. The vertical segments are perfectly aligned throughout, though the individual motifs are more monotonous and repetitious. It is the overall design of the walls, treated in delicate undulating rhythms of female dancers and musicians

suspended in front of a honeycombed screen that attracts the eye, rather than individual motifs.

The nata-mandira on top of the platform rests on a plinth consisting of a pabhaga, jangha, and baranda. The jangha is decorated with khakhara-mundis flanked by oblong niches housing primarily kanyas and elephant-lion motifs spaced at intervals and at the corners. An exception is a standing male musician, located near the east stairway, with an inscription on the pedestal. According to K. S. Behera it reads 'Somai Vaishnava', suggesting that the individual was closely associated with the structure, while Boner reads it as 'Somaguptai', based on the text of the *Baya Chakada* where it is recorded that the nata-mandira was constructed following the suggestions of Sadananda Gupta, most likely the dance-master.

The pillared hall proper above the plinth represents a transitional stage of development whereby the design becomes gradually transformed into a walled structure. There are still four rows of pillars with the centre two pillars, on all four sides of the outside rows serving as a frame for the major entrances, which are fronted by monumental stairways leading up the platform. Short walls are added on each side of the corner pillars while a torana design was added between each entrance and the corner wall. There are thus eight pillars in each outside row and three entrances, or toranas, on each side of the hall. On the north the flanking toranas were walled up so there is only one entrance. The large centre pillars of the outside rows project out from the wall. Their shaft is rounded and relieved with a row of dancing female figures at the base, wide vertical bands of scrollwork, and an overlaying garland at the top. The capitals and their arches are badly damaged or missing altogether. The remaining pillars of the outside rows have multiple offsets. The capitals are designed as a baranda with nine mouldings. Projecting out from the top three mouldings are large lotus-pendants that possibly served as brackets for the multi-foil arches spanning the openings. The wall sections, added in the north to fill the side toranas, effectively transform the closed bays on this side into retiring rooms for the dancers.

The interior has four massive pillars, 2.1m square and *tri-ratha* in design, which are aligned with the pillars framing the four major entrances. The floor is thus divided into nine compartments or squares

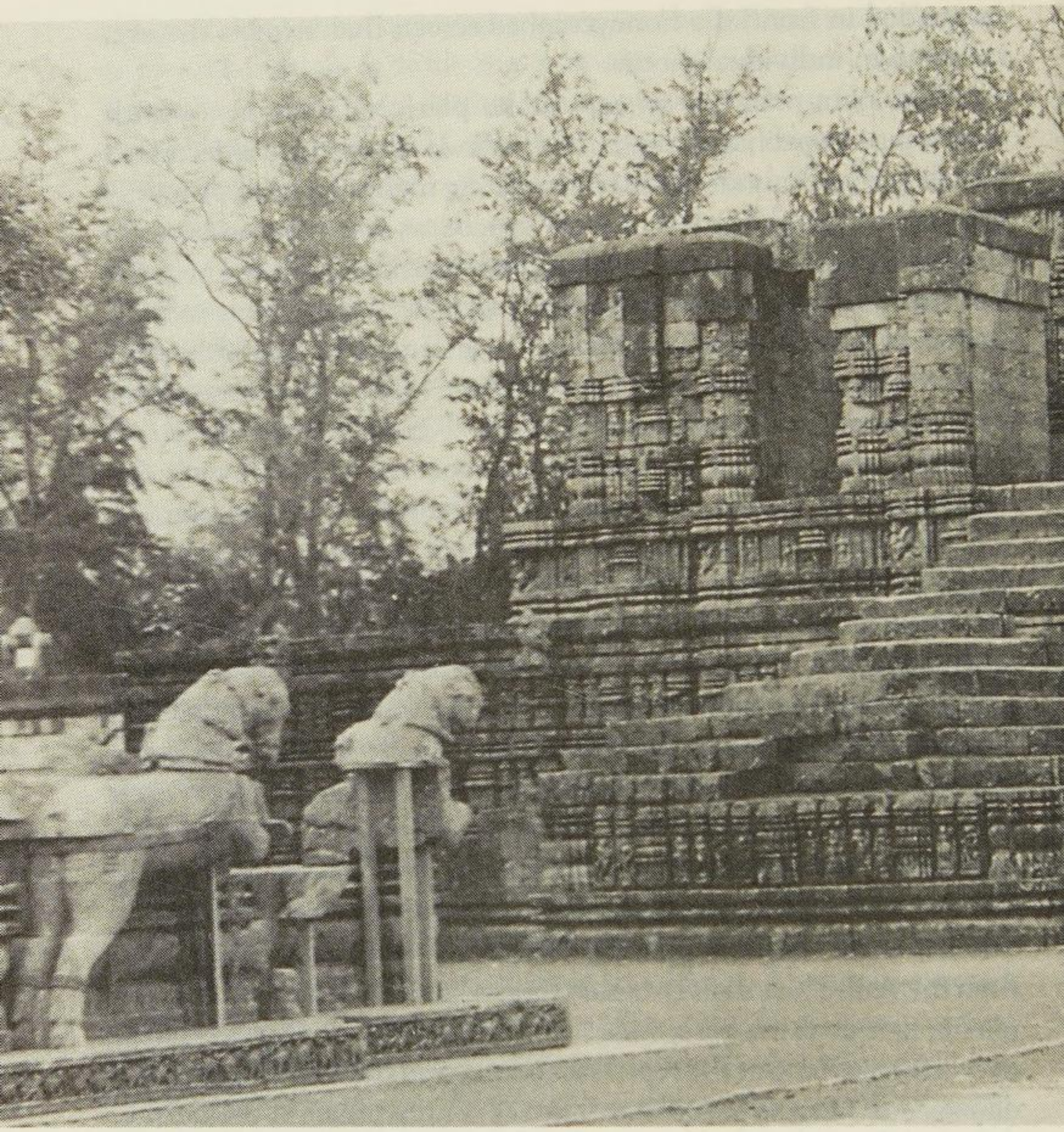
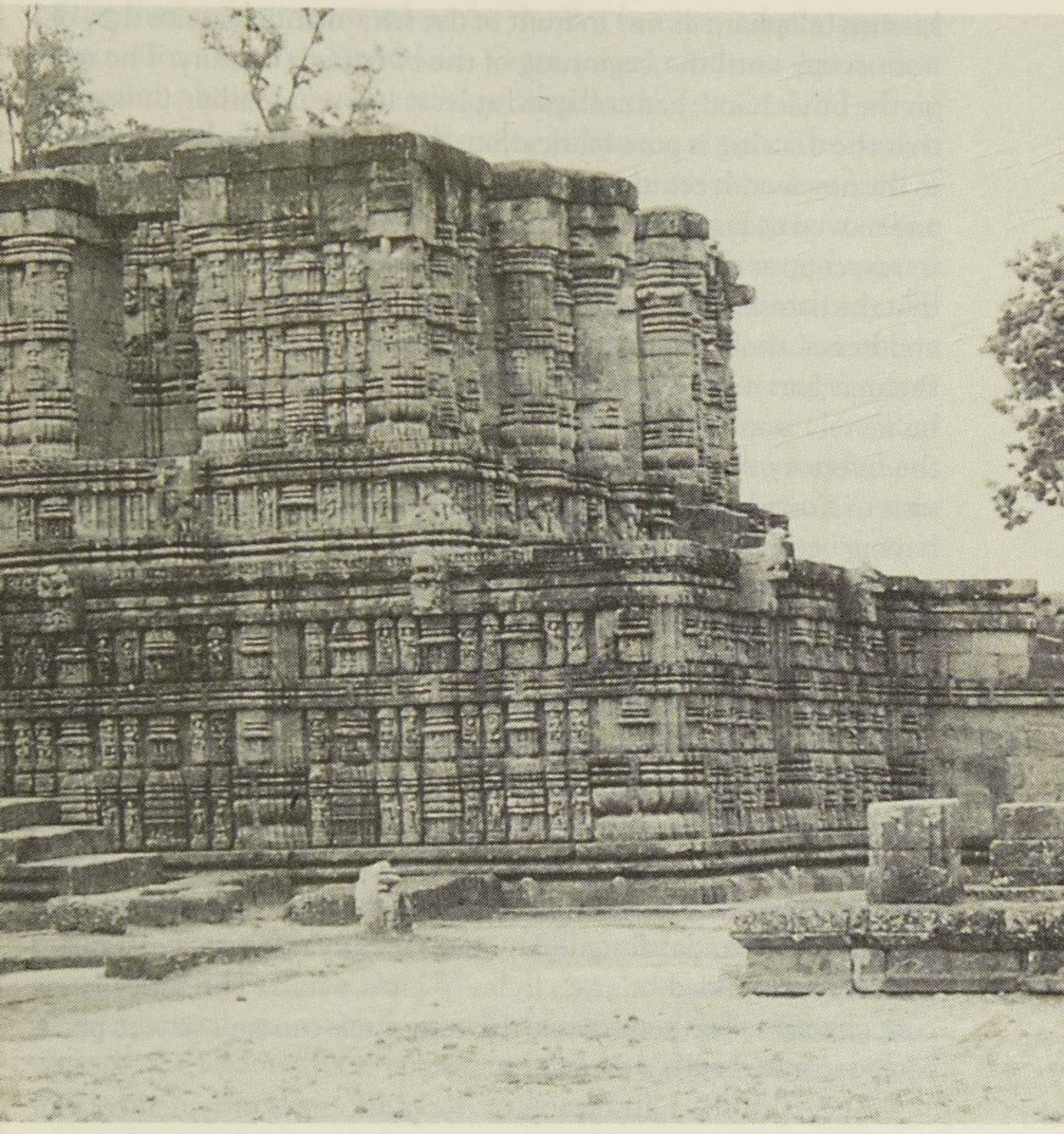


Photo 14. Surya Deul: southwest view of the *nata-mandira* with two of the horses of the main shrine in view

to form a yantra of nine planets, a groundplan also used for the construction of temporary stages as mentioned by Boner. The shaft of the pillars is a two-storey jangha with a pancha-ratha design, each paga ornamented with a dancing female musician on both storeys. The recesses are filled with leonine motifs and dancing female musicians.



Except for fragments of large coping stones, the roof is completely missing. In that the four interior pillars are taller than those of the exterior rows, it is evident that the roof must have been sloped. According to the palm-leaf manuscript of the *Architecture of the Padmakesara Temple of Konarka*, the roof was pyramidal and consisted of two tiers of pidha-mouldings but in the accompanying illustration there are three tiers, the same number mentioned in the *Madala Panji*. The illustration is obviously a late work as it depicts the colossal gaja-

krantas (elephant-lions) in front of the nata-mandira, a site they did not occupy until the beginning of the twentieth century. The roof, on the other hand, had collapsed at least 150 years earlier, indicating that the drawing is pure fabrication. According to tradition current in the nineteenth century, the nata-mandira at Konark was dismantled and moved to Puri by the Marathas in the eighteenth century where it was set up as the refectory. This belief probably stems from the fact that the nata-mandira, known to have existed, was completely buried and hence thought to have been transported to Puri. When Baba Brahmachari removed images to Puri, as recorded in the *Madala Panji*, he merely states that he kept the plundered images on the roof of the refectory, suggesting that this structure was already built. In his visit to Konark it was virtually an unknown site, his knowledge of it having been obtained from 'a reliable person', and until he actually came upon the ruins he had grave doubts about its existence. In that he makes no mention of a nata-mandira in his report, it must be assumed that the structure was already completely buried. When the structure was cleared of sand and debris in 1906, there is no mention of the crowning *mastaka* or pidha-mouldings, which presumably would have cluttered the immediate area, providing the roof was of pidha design. Preserved in the Konark Museum, however, is a beautifully carved lotus-medallion that most likely formed the crowning piece of the ceiling and suggests that the roof may have had a partially pyramidal design. An image of Surya is carved in a raised pericarp surrounded by two circles of lotus-petals. The inner circle contains eight plain petals while the outer circle contains sixteen petals each decorated with a dancer or musician.

Access to the hall on top of the platform is provided by four monumental stairways. The stairway on the west is double, the steps leading south and north, an accommodation probably dictated by the placement of the Aruna pillar and the pair of collosal gaja-krantas fronting the eastern stairway of the jagamohana.

Because of its isolated location and its pillared-hall design, it has been suggested that the structure was originally intended as a refectory. The basic axial plan, however, duplicates that of earlier temples with a three-structure alignment. In its present format the isolated nata-mandira does not detract from the grandeur of the chariot

of the Sun god being pulled across the sky, but may even suggest its destination, that is, *Surya-loka*. From inscriptions we know that Narasimha built a nata-mandira at Simhachalam in CE 1267–8 and that he presented one hundred dancing girls to the temple. The custom of dancing girls performing in a Surya temple dates back at least as early as the seventh century, as recorded by Xuanzang in reference to the temple at Multan. Testimony supporting this custom appears in the *Bhavishya Purana*, which advocates the dedication of beautiful girls to Surya for attaining Surya-loka. In that the devadasi system was formerly introduced in the temple of Srikurmam during the time of Vajrahasta V, the grandfather of Chodaganga, it is evident that Narasimha I is following the custom sanctioned by his forefathers. Whereas the devadasi custom had been in vogue for at least 200 years in Orissa, there is no epigraphical evidence concerning the erection of a refectory until at least the fifteenth century. It was not until later, with further changes in temple rituals, that a refectory became an essential structure and was added to the east-west axial alignment. As for the division of the interior by pillars, later nata-mandiras continue this tradition even when pillars are not essential to support a roof, so it cannot be a strong argument against the plan at Konark, which basically follows established tradition. Even the *Natyashastra* of Bharata recommends the raising of four pillars of the playhouse with proper ceremony while the nata-mandira at Simhachalam has 78 pillars, testifying that the presence of pillars did not make a building unsuitable for a nata-mandira. This pillared plan also cannot be taken as an argument against its use as a hall for learned discussions as even today, in the Jagannatha temple compound, such discussions take place in the mukti-mandapa, which is a pillared hall.

Figure and Decorative Motifs

With a large number of artisans from all parts of Orissa engaged in the construction, it is only natural to expect a qualitative disparity in respect to imagery. There is also conceptual disparity between the hieratic solemnity of the parshva-devatas, the monumental grandeur of the major images of the jangha, and the exuberant joy of life exhibited by the dancers of the nata-mandira, yet each group appears

Photo 15. Surya Deul: broken image of *alasa-kanya* (maiden) in the Konark Museum

appropriate for its surroundings and placement. The female musicians and dancers on the nata-mandira are particularly vivacious, their sinuous limbs seemingly bending to the sound of music, suspended in continuous flux in front of the delicate embroidery of minute honeycomb patterns, inviting us by example to participate in their festive rejoicing. The sensuous alasa-kanyas on the platform beneath the major shrine, in contrast, are more pensive in mood as they languorously stretch their arms above their heads, balancing their weight lazily on one leg, modestly enticing us to join them in leisure under the shade of a meandering creeper. In contrast to the slender-waisted, thin-limbed, youthful damsels of the nata-mandira and platform are the magnificent celestial musicians in the terraces of the jagamohana roof. These full-bodied female figures are heroic in scale and exhibit a grandeur of conception unparalleled in Orissan art. They are more restrained than their exuberant counterparts on the nata-mandira and exhibit a supreme grace and dignity befitting their lofty position on the temple. They are heavily bedecked with jewellery, showing a predilection for large circular earrings and heavy necklaces, while their upper forehead is draped with a web of beaded festoons dripping from diminutive kirtimukha masks. Their tresses are tied in a tight chignon at the back, a fashion that accentuates the natural shape of the head, though resulting in an almost bald appearance except for the festoons. Decorative tassels appear on the hips and the loose ends of

A. Surya Deul: *jagamohana;* east view with main entrance portal

B. Surya Deul: *jagamohana; maithuna* in a splayed recess of the upper *jangha*

C. Surya Deul: Surya (Haridashva) in the north *raha* niche
(3.6m by 1.7m)

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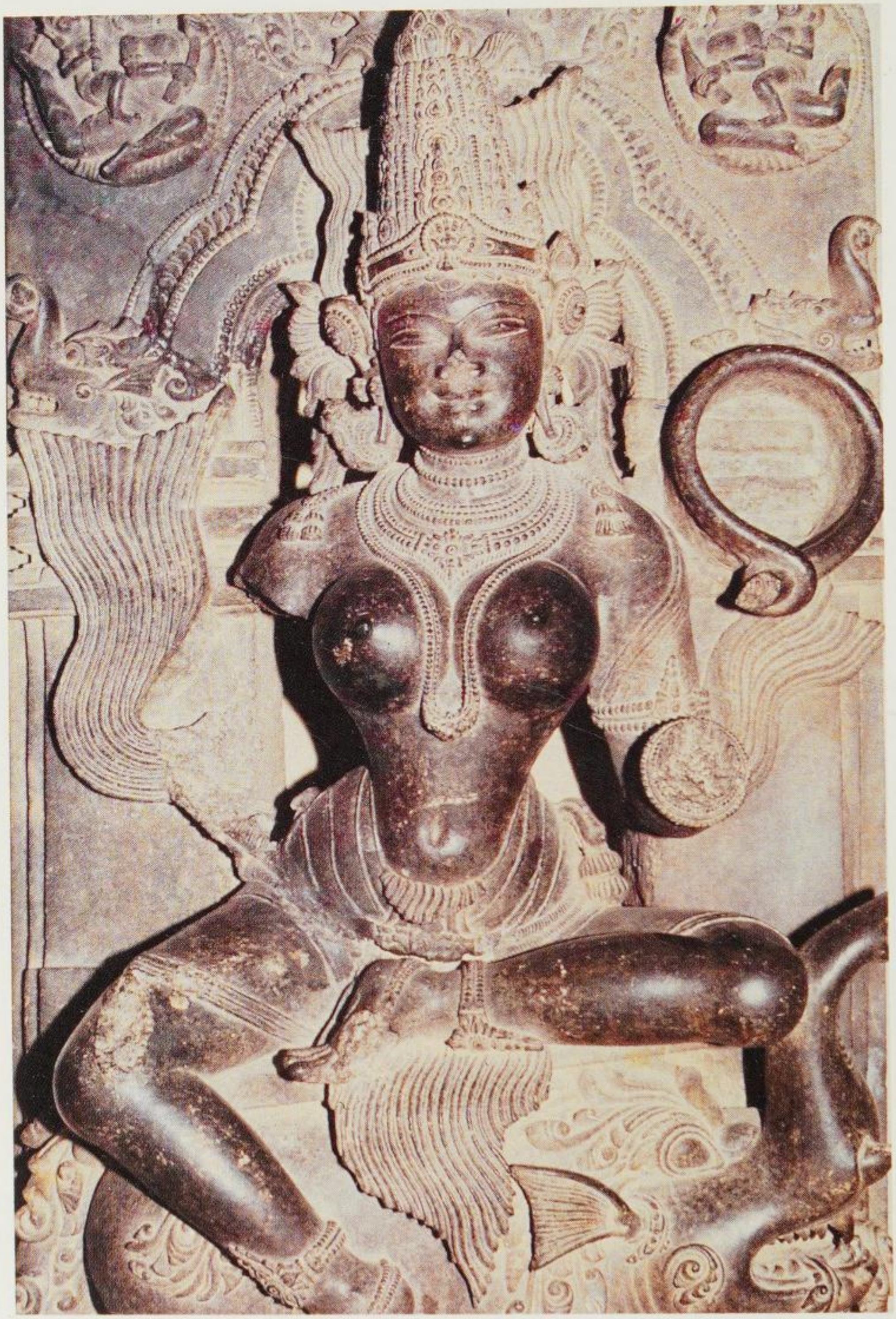


D. Surya Deul: detached image of the *dikpala-patni* Vārunani from the west *kanika* of the upper storey of the *jagamohana* (0.7m by 0.4m)

their lower garment hang from the centre belt-buckle. As maithuna partners in the upper-storey recesses of the jangha, the sensuous female figures, ever active but with controlled aggression, invariably pin their static male partner against the wall or mount him like a creeper entwining a tree.

Other figure motifs, especially prevalent on the platform walls and pabhaga, display everyday life of the Orissan people. The most numerous frieze motifs are those pertaining to military battle, obviously an imposing tribute to Narasimha's military prowess. In addition, there are single panels with warrior and hunting scenes. A frieze fragment from Konark on the Siddha Mahavira temple at Puri shows the construction of a temple, while in the Konark Museum a similar fragment depicts men dragging a huge block of stone, obviously for the construction of the Surya Deul. A standing, dignified couple in another panel have tentatively been identified as the sutradhara and his wife. In addition to palace scenes, with royal figures receiving visitors, there are many domestic scenes, including warriors departing from their family or mothers nursing a child. There are also scenes of acrobatics, sages, priests, emaciated ascetics, potbellied males, and

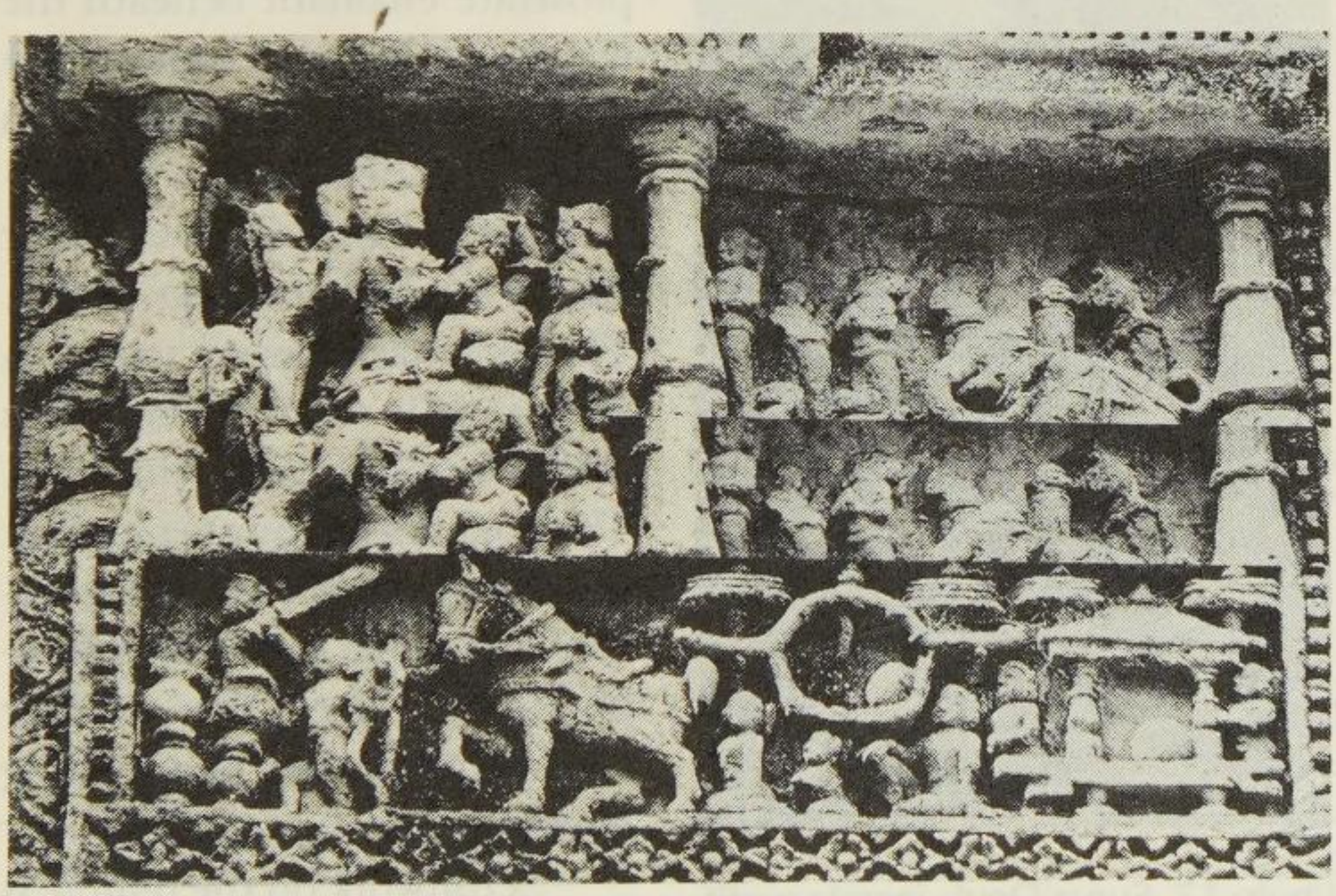


Photo 16. Surya Deul: scene in the palace of preparations for an impending journey, from the platform wall supporting the main shrine

the popular motif of a woman being molested by mischievous monkeys.

Of the multitude of animal motifs the most imposing are the freestanding pairs originally fronting the entrance portals of the jagamohana. They are monumental in scale and display a grandeur of conception similar to the female musicians on the roof. The colossal gaja-simha motifs that projected from each raha of the spire have survived only in fragments. Although the seven horses pulling the temple have been criticized as being ridicuously small for their task, they are beautifully carved and seemingly prance through the sky in an effortless manner. Each horse is fully caparisoned and wears a serpent around its neck, calling to mind the traditional belief that serpents harness the chariot of the Sun god. Equally impressive are the *virala* (griffin) motifs filling the recesses of the lower jangha and the jagrata motifs carved on the juncture. Smaller examples appear on the platform walls. A rider is added on the prostrate elephant beneath the leonine-monster in some of the jagrata motifs. In some virala motifs the head of the hybrid-monster is human (*nara-virala*) or that of an elephant (*gaja-virala*). The serpent pillars are varied in design with some having tails intertwining to form a mithuna. The double gaja-kranta motifs at the base are also varied in treatment. In some cases the triumphant lions face one another with uplifted paws, as if shaking hands.

Photo 17. Surya Deul: *jagrata* motif of warrior riding a leonine hybrid tampling an elephant with rider

Scrollwork on the temple is extremely rich. Horizontal bands are generally decorated with the

vanalata (forest-creeper) motif whereas the circular *vartula* and *agama* scrollwork usually appear on vertical panels or offsets. Due to the tremendous size of the temple, the scrollwork functions primarily as a background for the large individual figures or architectural motifs. Particularly popular is the perforated jali motif that forms delicate screenwork in front of which the figures appear to float. This network of perforations tends to dematerialize the stone background of the major motifs thereby accentuating the importance of each through isolation, yet unifying the overall decorative programme into a cohesive and harmonious whole.

SEVEN

Vaishnava Brick Temple

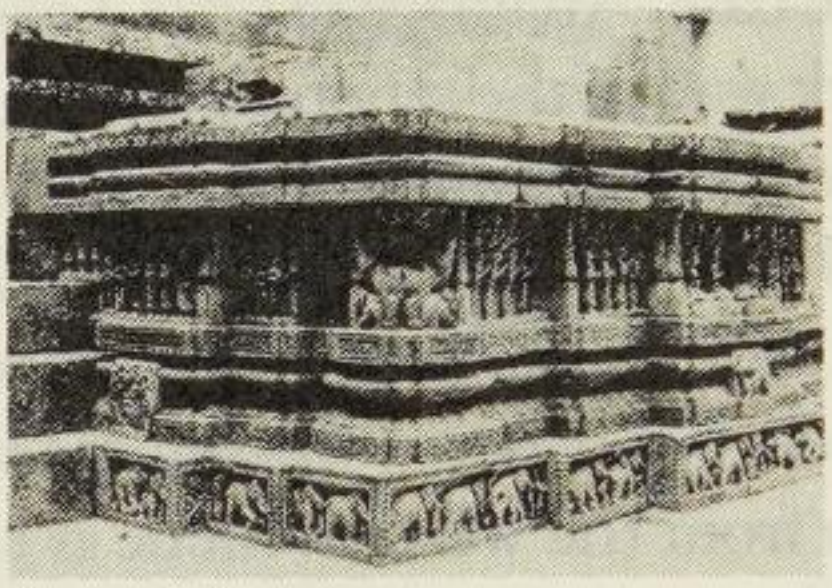
The small brick Vaishnava temple in the southwest corner of the compound consists of a deul, jagamohana, and fragments of a Garuda pillar. The structures, made of large bricks, are only partially intact, the superstructures completely missing, and they are generally devoid of exterior decoration. The deul, 3.1m square, is pancha-ratha in design. The pabhaga consists of four mouldings while the jangha is divided into two storeys by a stringcourse, with the lower story measuring 0.6m in height. Only portions of the upper jangha are intact. The jangha is undecorated except for the raha. The jagamohana, 4.8m square, is also pancha-ratha in plan. The pabhaga consists of only three mouldings. The jangha is divided into two storeys by a stringcourse with the lower storey measuring 0.41m and the upper storey 0.4m in height. Khakhara-mundis and pidha-mundis decorate the lower- and upper-storey pagas. The gavaksha projects out 0.5m on the north and south.

The entrance portal on the east, projecting 0.9m from the wall, contains a stone doorframe with the lower portions of the jambs and the sill in the form of a plain moonstone (*nandavarta*). The doorguards stand with one leg uplifted and one arm crossed in front of the body

where it rests on a staff or club, the other hand displaying abhaya-mudra. The lintel and architrave are missing. The khondalite doorframe of the sanctum is more elaborate and better preserved with traces of chocolate-red paint adhering to its plastered surface. The jambs are divided into three bands on each side with Ganga and Yamuna placed at the base. An image of Gaja-Lakshmi is on the lintel.

Against the back wall of the sanctum is a long brick pedestal, tri-ratha in plan, that extends the width of the interior. Images of Vishnu and Balarama found near the temple in 1906–07 most likely served as the presiding deities. Two of the parshva-devata images—Varaha and Trivikrama—were *in situ* when the temple was unearthed. The image of Narasimha from the western niche is badly fragmented.

There are, in addition, numerous subsidiary structures within the temple complex though most are reduced to their plinths, the largest being the kitchen situated to the south of the nata-mandira. The structure apparently consisted of four wings with a central oblong courtyard. Other structures include several pillared mandapas and two wells. To the southeast of the compound is the famous *arkavata* (sun-tree) mentioned in the *Surya-Tattva Vistara*.



Site Information

The Sun temple of Konark was added to UNESCO's World Heritage list in 1984. The village of Konark is situated within 3 km of the Bay of Bengal in the Puri district of Orissa.

How to get there

Konark is well connected by good motorable roads from Bhubaneswar (66 km) and Puri (30 km), the three sites forming the 'Golden Triangle' popular with tourists. Both Bhubaneswar and Puri are important stations on the Southeastern Railway, connected by daily trains from Delhi, Kolkata, Chennai, and Mumbai. Tourists may travel from Bhubaneswar or Puri by regular bus or taxi, or by tourist coaches or cars that can be arranged through local hotels or Tourist Offices. Bhubaneswar has an airport with regular flights to and from Mumbai, Kolkata, New Delhi, and Vijayawada/Hyderabad, though it is advisable to book flights at least two weeks in advance.

Where to Stay

It is delightful to spend at least a day in Konark, as one can enjoy a

spectacular view of the temple in the evening when it is lit up. There are various options for accommodation in Konark:

Yatrinivas (Orissa Tourism Development Corporation), Tel. 06758–35820;
Travellers' Lodge (OTDC), Tel. 06758–35823;
Panthnivas, opposite the temple entrance, Tel. 06758–35831;
Inspection Bungalow (PWD), Tel. 06758–35834

More luxurious hotels and restaurants are situated in Bhubaneswar and Puri, with the latter site also offering seashore cottages and bathing beaches.

When to visit

Because the site is near the ocean, there is always a breeze making it comfortable even on the hottest days (April–May), though the monsoon season should probably be avoided. The best time to visit is between November and March.

Temperature (°C): Summer–Max. 43, Min. 33.2; Winter–Max. 26.7, Min. 10.6.
Rainfall: 152.4 cms (July to September).

ASI Museum

There is an Archaeological Museum near the temple at Konark, which is open daily from 10 am to 5 pm, except on Fridays. It houses important sculptural panels found detached from the temple.

Festivals

Among the festivals is the Magha-Shukla saptami or *Chandrabhaga-Yatra* that draws up to fifty thousand pilgrims. This festival takes place on the seventh day (saptami) of the bright half of the month of Magha (January-February). After viewing the rising sun from the beach, the pilgrims proceed to the temple where they worship the Navagrahas (nine planetary divinities).

There are numerous cultural festivals throughout the year,

including Odissi dance performances generally in November and February, and exhibitions of *patta* and palm-leaf paintings. Pipli, on the road between Bhubaneswar and Puri, is famous for its appliqué work. Orissa is known for ikat fabrics.

The path leading from the village to the temple compound is lined with curio and gift shops specializing in Orissan handicrafts. Additional gift shops are situated on the beach, some 3 km southeast of the temple. Swimming can be dangerous in the sea as currents are strong here. There is a fishing village nearby and tourists can watch the fishermen launch their boats in the early morning or view the women in the late afternoon transporting the fish in baskets balanced on their heads. Shell-gathering along the beach is also popular at sunrise and occasionally you may see large dead turtles that have strayed away from their course to Gahiramatha washed onto the beach. Gahiramatha, the world's largest sea-turtle (Olive Ridley) rookery, is situated in the Rajnagar tahsil between the mouths of the Brahmani and Vaitarani rivers on the northern border of Cuttack district, near the Bhitar-Kanika Wild Life Sanctuary, home of the world's largest living salt-water crocodiles.

Places around Konark

No visitor to Konark can afford to miss the temple towns of Bhubaneswar and Puri. Bhubaneswar has temples built between the sixth and fifteenth centuries. Its Rajarani and Lingaraja temples are among the magnificent monuments of India. The ancient caves of Udayagiri and Khandagiri, 7 km west of Bhubaneswar, are of great historical interest. Puri's Jagannatha temple is considered to be one of the holiest Hindu shrines. Its cart festival—Ratha Yatra—draws hundreds of pilgrims and tourists in June/July.

Other interesting archaeological sites in the area include the Mangala temple at Kakatpur, the Shobhaneshvara Shiva temple at Niali, the Grameshvara Shiva temple at Nivarana, the Madhavananda temple at Madhava, the Varahi temple at Chaurasi, the Gangeshvari temple at Beyalisbati, the Purneshvara Shiva temple at Bhillideuli, the Somanatha temple at Vishnupur, the Shiva temple at Belesvara,

the Ramachandi temple at the mouth of the Kushabhadra river, and the Trivenishvara temple at Madhipur. Recent archaeological excavations have brought to light ruins of a Buddhist monastery at Kuruma, and an ancient seaport at Khalkattapatna, 11 km east of Konark on the left bank of the Kushabhadra.

Glossary

alasa-kanya: indolent or playful maiden; *nayika*

anartha-paga: vertical wall projection (*ratha*) running from the base of the *bada* to the *bisama* (neck), situated between the *kanika* and the *raha*

anga-shikhara: miniature representation of the *rekha* on the spire of a temple; turret

anuraha: narrow vertical recess separating the projecting *pagas*

avarana-devata: secondary divinities surrounding the main image in the temple, forming a protective ring around the temple; they usually occupy the *anartha* niches

bada: wall portion of the temple below the curvilinear spire or pyramidal roof, consisting of a *pabhaga*, *jangha*, *bandhana*, and *baranda*

bandhana: stringcourse; series of horizontal mouldings along a wall

baranda: moulding, single or multiple, forming the top element of the *bada*, serving to demarcate the *bada* from the *gandi*

bhoga-mandapa: the refectory hall of a temple; hall of offering

bhumi: storey; plane; horizontal division of the *gandi* or spire

chauri: flywhisk; fan made with the tail-hair of a yak

deul: general name for a temple as a whole. When used alone it refers to the sanctuary as distinguished from the *jagamohana*

devadasi: temple dancing girl, whose ostentatious duty was to sing before images of the deity at regular intervals

dikpala(s): guardians of the eight quarters, housed in niches of the *kanika* in most later temples; *dikpala-patnis* are female counterparts

dvarapala(s): doorguard at the entrance to the shrine, one placed on either side of the door

gaja-simha: motif of a lion seated or springing on the back of an elephant; *gaja-kranta*

gandi: 'trunk'; curvilinear spire or pyramidal roof above the *bada*; superstructure; *shikhara*

gavaksha: transept; mullioned window on the north and south centre projections of the *jagamohana*

graha(s): planetary deities

jagamohana: rectangular or square hall in front of the sanctum; *mandapa*

jagrata: leonine monster leaping on its hind legs above a crouching elephant or a demon warrior; may have a warrior or amazon as a rider

jangha: 'shin'; vertical portion of the *bada* between the *pabhaga* and the *baranda*

jata-mandala: coiffure arranged in tiers of serpentine curls forming a circle around the head

jata-mukuta: a coil of matted and clotted hair forming a conical crown

kalasha: water jar; crowning element of the *mastaka* in the form of a vase, symbolically figuring as the container of the nectar of immortality

kanika-paga: corner vertical segment running up the height of the structure; *konaka*

kanya: maiden; young girl; 'damsel'; female in various poses

khakhara: semi-cylindrical member resembling the fruit *kakharu* or *vaita-kakharu*, a variety of pumpkin gourd

khakhara-deul: temple having a *khakhara* as the crowning member

khura: first basic element of the *pabhaga*, in the form of a hoof

kirita-mukuta: conical coiffure studded with jewels and hanging chains

kirtimukha: 'face of glory'; decorative motif showing the grinning face of a lion with festoons of pearls dripping from its mouth

kumbha: form of water pot or pitcher; second element of the *pabhaga*

lalitasana: relaxed seated pose with one leg pendent while the other is under the body

linga: male generative organ; the phallic emblem of Shiva

makara: legendary aquatic animal with the head of a crocodile, a small proboscis, and the body of a fish

makara-torana: *torana* with a *makara* on each side at the base of the arch and a *kirtimukha* at the apex

mithuna: amorous couple in various degrees of intimacy; *maithuna* when engaged in sexual congress

mundi: miniature temple carved on *pagas* as a decorative motif

naga: serpent; fabulous creature with a human bust, serpent tail and a canopy of serpent hoods; female counterpart is *nagi*

naga-stambha: pillar encircled with one or more *nagas* or *nagis*

nata-mandira: festive hall; dance hall

navagraha: slab on the architrave of the portal with the nine planetary representations, that is, (1) Ravi (sun); (2) Soma (moon); (3) Mangala (Mars); (4) Budha (Mercury); (5) Brshapati (Jupiter); (6) Shukra (Venus); (7) Sani (Saturn); (8) Rahu (ascending node); and (9) Ketu (descending node)

nava-ratha: temple with nine projecting *pagas* (*rathas*) on each side

nisha-garbhaka: small shrine erected in front of the *raha* niche of the *deul*

pabhaga: division corresponding to 'foot'; a set of lowermost mouldings at the base of a temple; *panchakarma*

paga: vertical projecting division of the wall and superstructure of the temple; *ratha*

pancha-ratha: temple with five projecting *pagas* on each side

parshva-devata: *devas* (deities) connected in doctrine with the main divinity of the temple; placed in the centre (*raha*) niche on each side of the temple

pidha: projecting members constituting the pyramidal roof of a *pidha-deul*

pitha: base or plinth of the temple below the *pabhaga*: stylobate; seat; a centre or place of worship

pratiratha: thin *paga* inserted between the major *pagas*; *uparatha*; *pariratha*

puja: worship

raha: central vertical projection on each side of the *deul*

ratha: vertical projections of the temple; *paga*; temple car

sandhi-sthala: juncture; wall portion connecting *deul* with the *jagamohana*; bonding

sapta-ratha: temple with seven projecting *pagas* on each side

shikshadana: motif of a guru instructing his disciples or a king/queen surrounded by ministers or attendants

shilpa-shastra: Sanskrit manual giving general principles and rules of architecture and allied arts

shilpin: artist; architect; artisan

stambha: pillar; column

sutradhara: 'holder of the thread'; chief architect responsible for the construction of the temple

tala-garbhika: decorative motif below the niches of the lower *jangha*, inserted into or overlays the *pabhaga* mouldings

torana: gateway in the form of an arch springing from two pillars; portal; entrance; design carved on the back-slab of major deities

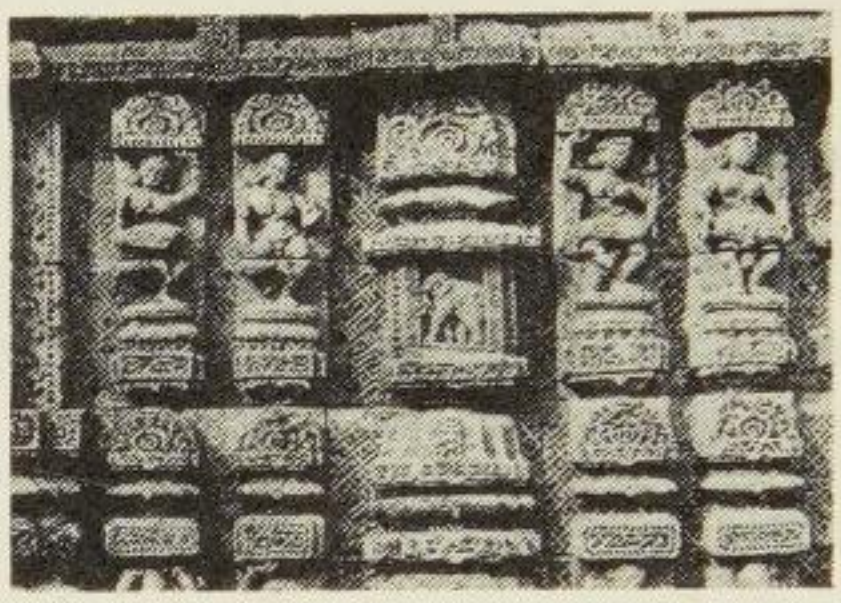
tri-ratha: temple with three *pagas* on each side

upana: low plinth of a structure; berm; stylobate

vajra-mastaka: prominent ornament on the spire consisting of *chaitya*-medallions formed by pearls dripping from the mouth of a *kirtimukha*; *gaja-simha* may project out above the motif

virala: a rampant lion springing on a crouching elephant or demonic warrior; *vyala*; *nara-virala* (has the head of a man); *gaja-virala* (has the head of an elephant)

yoni: the female organ of generation



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